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Tuesday 15 October 1996

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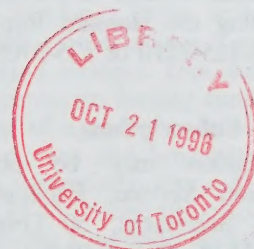
Mardi 15 octobre 1996

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1335.
Prayers.*

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 1996 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Today once again I rise to address the great hardship brought about by the government's broken promises to help people with disabilities, the sick, the frail and seniors in the Metro area.

These are the true victims of the Harris cuts: individuals who in most cases already face overwhelming hardships and need the services of GO Transit to get to their doctors or to hospital for life-saving treatment. An estimated 10,000 people will be deemed ineligible for Wheel-Trans, many of whom have hidden disabilities. Being denied Wheel-Trans will mean that they will not be able to do things like get to medical appointments, attend schools or work programs or even just get out into the community. Thanks to the Harris government's \$8.7-million cuts to transportation, these people are now prisoners in their own homes.

Today, a total of 11 organizations are meeting with the Toronto Transit Commission to request that their constituents' right to transportation be protected and that thousands of GO Transit users not be cut off the service. These groups include the Coalition of Ambulatory Disabled Persons at Risk, the Aphasia Centre of North York, Bloorview MacMillan Centre, the Canadian Council of the Blind, the Epilepsy Association of Ontario, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Metro Stroke Leadership Coalition, the Ontario March of Dimes —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Time. The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): It's one week and counting to October 22, which is the beginning of the Metro Days of Action. Community organizations and coalitions are being brought together right across this region of Metro in their joint effort and joint commitment to fight back against the Harris government victimization of so many in our province.

The Metro Days of Action are bringing people together who have never worked together before. They're being united around a goal and a vision of having a different kind of province from what we see today and what the Harris government is leaving.

As I look at the leaflet from the Metro Days of Action, I can see the reasons set out there, what they're trying to educate people about in terms of this government's action: Hospitals are being closed; health care waiting lists grow; loss of control of the school system; local control is threatened; affordable public housing and rent control are abandoned; the most vulnerable people — the poor, the disadvantaged, first nations — are scapegoated; seniors must pay user fees for drugs. It goes on and on.

They make a really important point at the end of their leaflet. They say to people: "After reading this, if you still think that you personally have little to lose, then please think about the kids. You can't blame an innocent child for not understanding what is happening in this province. There's no excuse for us."

I agree with that sentiment. I agree with the Days of Action. I support their protest. I'll be out there at community organizations, helping them protest against the Harris government. The movement is growing.

HOME CARE

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): The Canadian Red Cross has joined with home support agencies throughout Ontario and across Canada to celebrate National Homemaker/Home Support Worker Week 1996 from October 13 to 19.

Care in the home is the way of the future, not only because it helps people maintain independence in their time of need, but on a larger scale because reform of Ontario's health system means a growing shift towards community-based services. That shift includes the \$170-million long-term-care facility funding program to give more people of all ages higher levels of care and support in their own homes and long-term-care facilities with cost-effective community services. It also includes the establishment of 43 community care access centres across Ontario to provide simplified access to a range of long-term-care services, including nursing, therapy, home-making and long-term-care facilities.

The Red Cross offers a variety of programs and services that help people maintain a life in their own home. Without these services, many people would find themselves without any alternative but to leave their homes and live in an institution. I congratulate the Canadian Red Cross homemakers and home support workers for bringing a human touch to the lives of so many people. In doing so they also give independence, pride and dignity.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My statement today is in the form of a question. I'd like to know how serious the Minister of Health is in determining real care for pregnant women in my community. I'd like to tell all members of the House that my community is but the first. Many other communities which do not happen to be around teaching centres will be facing what my community is currently facing, and that is lack of care for women who are critically in need of it because they are pregnant women and in many instances are pregnant women at risk.

As of today OHIP is currently negotiating with American hospitals to determine the level of fees. As it was put to the American hospitals, they are trying to negotiate a discount based on volume. I have to ask the members opposite, how serious can our minister be in trying to negotiate in good faith with all of the physicians in Ontario while the other arm of the minister is busy negotiating with the American hospitals to determine fees at a discount because of volume? I find this just an affront — an affront to the physicians all across Ontario, but more important, to the women in my community who are still looking for care. We currently have women who have had appointments with American doctors. They've been put off because the pre-approval simply did not come through on time. The Minister of Health has a responsibility to help all patients in Ontario, including pregnant women in my community.

NATIONAL CO-OP WEEK

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I would like to take this opportunity to recognize National Co-op Week and congratulate Ontario's co-ops for the contribution they make to Ontario's communities and economy. Co-operatives have played a significant role in providing important goods and services in the agricultural sector, the child care sector, the insurance and financial service sectors, and increasingly in the provision of public services.

Co-ops continue to show how much people can achieve when they work together, pool resources and share skills for the benefit of their members and their communities. Because co-ops are locally based and member-owned, the benefits are invested back in Ontario communities and are an important catalyst for job creation and economic growth. Over 1,400 co-ops and 500 credit unions and caisses populaires now have over two million members in Ontario. Their combined assets of over \$15 billion are a significant factor in Ontario's economy.

This year, as in previous years, the Canadian Co-operative Association is hosting its annual MPP reception. I encourage my colleagues to attend tomorrow's reception to learn about the achievements of Ontario co-operatives. Co-ops are an important resource for ensuring that in this time of cost restraints and restructuring public services remain affordable, accessible and accountable.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): I'm pleased today to bring to the honourable members' attention that

we are celebrating the fourth annual Good Neighbours Week from October 14 through 20. Good Neighbours is a community-based public awareness program that helps make Ontario communities safer, friendlier and more responsive to people in need, especially those who are frail, vulnerable and isolated. The campaign is designated to encourage people to reach out and help others. For example, in my home community of Brampton, the Good Neighbours program comes under the umbrella of the Bramalea police advisory committee. The program will be involved in the Safe City initiative, which is part of the Brampton crime prevention program.

We are working to make our community, already one of the safest, even better. More people will get to know about the Good Neighbours program since it will be part of the community operations located in our regional mall, the Bramalea City Centre. The aim is to help communities become healthier and safer by creating informal networks that complement professional services already in place and reinforce the values found in caring, friendly neighbours.

Good Neighbours is a three-way partnership involving the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, corporate sponsors and community volunteers. It is an excellent example of the success that can be achieved when the public and private sectors work together to support community needs.

Simply put, being a good neighbour is helping those who need help. During this week and throughout the year I encourage all members to do as the Good Neighbours slogan says, "Take time to reach out."

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AWARDS

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): I rise today to recognize two North York public schools that have received awards of excellence in education from the National Quality Institute. Humber Summit Middle School and Grenoble Public School received national awards for their continuous improvement in student achievement and their strong partnerships with parents in the community. Humber Summit Middle School and Grenoble Public School are considered special needs schools. Students at both schools are performing above the North York average in mathematics and above the national average in reading and writing.

I'm pleased to report to the Legislature that schools and service departments at the Board of Education for the City of North York have won four out of five National Quality Institute education awards over the last two years. Through their continued quality improvement and outstanding commitment to quality education, the North York Board of Education has proven once again that its approach to quality education is working.

As Veronica Lacey, the North York education director, said, "Once again the board's schools and service departments have stood the test of the National Quality Institute's tough quality criteria and we came out winners."

On behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, and in the place of the Minister of Education, who should be making these kinds of statements, I'd like to congratulate Humber Summit Middle School, Grenoble Public School and the North York Board of Education for the excel-

lence and leadership they have shown in education in Ontario.

COMMENTS OF THE PREMIER

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to raise a very sensitive issue in regard to comments the Premier is quoted as making when he was in Sault Ste Marie last week.

Mr Harris, according to the Sault Star, said that despite conflicting legal advice on the issue, the government may call an inquiry into the handling of sex abuse complaints by the Sault Ste Marie District Roman Catholic Separate School Board even though lawsuits against current and former board members are still before the court.

Mr Harris is quoted as saying, "I want to tell you we are very receptive and understanding and sympathetic to the desires of the community, and my sense is of the school board itself, to understand what happened, and we're concerned as a province for procedures that ought to be in place for school boards in the future."

The Premier, if he is stating government policy, is responding to a very serious and deep desire of the people of Sault Ste Marie and area that this matter should be inquired into. He is not agreeing with his colleague the Minister of Education and Training, who up to now has said that he would not call an inquiry.

I urge the Premier to exercise his role as the head of the government and direct that an inquiry be held as soon as possible into this very serious matter.

PATRICK W. OLIVE

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I'd like to inform my honourable colleagues in this chamber today about the fine work being done by Mr Patrick W. Olive, commissioner of economic development for Durham region.

At the annual meeting of the Economic Developers Association of Canada held September 21 to 24 in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Mr Olive was proclaimed Canada's economic developer of the year. This singular honour is a credit not only to Mr Olive's involvement within Durham region but also to his contribution to the economic development profession in Ontario, Canada and around the world.

The criteria for this award are, firstly, substantial and recognized contributions to professional development and the educational requirements of the profession; secondly, public education on the role of economic development; thirdly, development of new strategies spearheading major developments; and finally, media promotion of economic development.

The program, sponsored by the Royal Bank of Canada, hopes to foster a sincere effort to improve and develop professional conduct for Canadian economic development professionals that will lead to job and wealth creation for Canadians.

Mr Olive's efforts represent a benchmark for others to emulate. Let all of us as legislators congratulate Mr Olive on a job well done. It is through the efforts of individuals such as Mr Olive that the world will know that Ontario truly is open for business.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): My question today is for the Premier, but I see he's not in the House yet. The opposition was told he would be here.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can stand down your question until the Premier comes or put it to someone else.

Mr Duncan: I'll stand down the first question.

The Speaker: The second question, opposition.

Mr Duncan: The second question is also to the Premier, who is not in the House.

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: Here he is.

The Speaker: Reset the clock. The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: My question is for the Premier. Today the auditor's report condemned your decision to let the Highway 407 management and maintenance contract go without tender. It's not just any contract. We estimate its value could be in excess of half a billion dollars. Can you tell me why this contract would be let without the benefit of a public tender and how you can ensure the public will enjoy the benefits normally associated with tendering, that is, proper public accountability?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister can explain that.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Certainly, as required by our collective agreement with OPSEU, the Ministry of Transportation made reasonable efforts to have the contractor make offers of employment to our workers as well. But the question the honourable member asked was: Why is this government taking this approach? This government is taking this approach to deliver the best possible service to the people of Ontario in the most cost-effective way. As far as the tendering process we have in place is concerned, certainly we have taken every precaution to make sure there was a fair process, and we've done that.

Mr Duncan: The minister obviously didn't get the question. We knew that the 407 was built as a bypass; we didn't know the government intended to use it as a bypass around the tendering process.

The auditor says quite clearly that taxpayers are on the hook for more than \$1 billion. That's the fault of the New Democrats. Where you're negligent is that you took a sweetheart deal and added more sugar. By allowing the contract, a contract which could be worth half a billion dollars, you will know, as the auditor says, that you haven't gone through a proper process.

We're also interested to know that a member of the Premier's staff was going to work for the company that got the contracts involved, one Mitch Patten, the Premier's deputy principal secretary. He has announced that he's leaving the Premier's office and will be joining the very firm that was awarded the sweetheart deal. Can you tell me what role Mr Patten played in deciding to forgo the tendering process and in the whole sweetheart

contract? Perhaps you'd like to throw it back to the Premier if you could.

Hon Mr Palladini: This is something the previous government initiated and agreed to do. All we've done, basically, is inherit what the previous government had negotiated. We have a contract that we must abide by. We've done just that. We've abided by the contracts that were in place in order to deliver the 407, and that's what we're doing.

Mr Duncan: The minister is clearly not in charge of his own brief. In fact we checked and it was your government that negotiated this deal, not the previous government. How could your government have allowed it to go on?

We've also heard that one Peter Clute is heading to the privatization scheme to head that up, I believe the chief of staff to the finance minister. This just confirms our worst fears about the entire privatization and is demonstrated by your own lack of knowledge and understanding on this very significant contract.

What are you doing around privatization and how are you going to ensure that the public benefits from privatization, that it's not just an effort to reward old Tory hacks, and make sure that honest companies doing business in this province can get access to government work?

Hon Mr Palladini: I can assure the honourable members that before anything does get privatized, everything will be done according to the proper processes in order to get to the delivery price.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): My question is again to the Premier. This time it has to do with recommendations from the Auditor General with respect to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. I'd like to quote to the Premier from the auditor.

"In order to properly safeguard the ecosystem and human health, the Ministry of Environment and Energy should update its standards for air pollutants. About 80% of all potentially harmful chemicals released in Ontario are released in the air. In 1992, the minister reviewed the standards for about 300 of these pollutants and determined that they had to be updated. Almost four years later, none of these 226 standards have been updated."

How does the Premier respond to this very serious concern that's been raised by the auditor on the issue of our healthy and clean environment?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I respond by referring it to the Minister of Environment and Energy.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I agree with the auditor.

Mr Duncan: Well, it's good, Minister, because your government has cut funding for the ministry by close to \$88 million, one third of your entire staff. If you agree with the auditor, why did your government undertake these initiatives and what are you going to do to respond to ensure that our air and water continue to be safe and that your ministry fulfils its obligations?

Hon Mr Sterling: For the past 20 years, previous governments have ignored air quality standards and

bringing them up to date. On Thursday I answered a question, and it's true, as outlined by the auditor and as outlined by the previous minister of the environment's report, in the 1992 report cited by the auditor, that these air quality standards must be updated. That's why my ministry has put forward a plan to deal with the most critical and most often used emissions in the province of Ontario. We plan to attack this problem frontally and we plan to attack it with seriousness, more seriousness than any of the previous governments have thought to do.

Mr Duncan: Your plan of attack is to attack the very people who enforce our environmental laws. Your plan of attack has nothing to do with improving the air and water quality in this province and has everything to do with gutting the very existence of government in this province and the very existence of the Ministry of Environment. That answer is absolutely shameful.

I'd like to read a little bit more from the auditor's report in case the minister hasn't had a chance to read it. It says: "Drinking water surveillance program, established in 1986: As of December 31, 1993, the program covered 120 of 490 water treatment plants serving about seven million or 70% of Ontario's population. The ministry had planned to extend the program to about 15 new plants every year. However, citing resource constraints, the ministry has added only 13 plants."

How do you jibe your answer with what the auditor's telling you? The auditor's telling you that air quality is suffering, that water quality is suffering, and that your government is not only not responding, but you're undermining our very ability to ensure that Ontarians have safe and healthy drinking water and a safe and healthy air supply. How do you respond to that and how will you ensure that these standards are enforced across this entire province?

Hon Mr Sterling: The water quality program the member refers to is an overlay of another monitoring program which is undertaken by all of the municipalities across the province of Ontario. Each municipality has the obligation to take samples of water on a routine basis, and if there is a discovery that there is a lack of quality in that water, then that is reported to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. It is at that stage that we implement the second stage of a monitoring program. Therefore, all water under municipal plants is monitored in this province, I am assured by my officials.

Quite frankly, the auditor says that we are dealing with water quality standards and soil quality standards in a satisfactory manner. If you read his report in full, you will find that. I am satisfied that we're dealing with the situation, we are dealing with the most pressing problems, and we feel we can do it with the resources we have at this time.

1400

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week the Solicitor General informed us that your office was provided with a copy of a briefing note, which would have come to you on March 18, entitled Illegal Gambling, Criminal Intelligence Service

Ontario Report. Did you read this briefing note or were you briefed on the contents of this briefing note by staff?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I've never read the briefing note, but I do recall being briefed on the contents, because I believe there was an article back last March or April in the Windsor paper. There was a briefing note on it and I think you may have a copy of the briefing note now. I think that was made available. There you go.

Mr Hampton: The briefing note wasn't made available; some people had to pry very hard to get it. The government doesn't want anybody to even see the report.

There's something passing strange here. Last week you were asked in a press scrum if you had heard about this report and you said you hadn't read the report and you didn't know if you should be concerned about it or not. What's unusual about that is that the issues raised in this briefing note are very clear. It says, "The purpose of this report is to identify the areas within the gaming industry that are susceptible to abuse by organized crime." Then it lists, very prominently, video gambling machines.

How could you have read the press report and had someone on your staff advise you of the briefing note, how could that happen without it raising some level of concern with you about legalized gambling and organized crime and its involvement in video lottery machines?

Hon Mr Harris: It did raise a concern with me. What I was asked was, I believe, ought I to be concerned that I hadn't read the report? I said no, I don't know that, I haven't read it. Am I concerned about the issue? Of course. Is the minister? Of course. Which is why we've responded with Bill 75. Which is why we've responded to try to get at the number of illegal machines the report refers to. The briefing I received said there are X number of illegal VLT machines out there. The report, as I recollect, says there are more illegal ones than we plan to make legal.

The report also says that we should be concerned about anti-gambling strategies, that we should make sure that the resources are there for the police. In the absence of any action — you left such a mess, you refused to respond to any of that — that's why, of course, we've been responding. We've received nothing but congratulations from the police and those involved for the way we've responded.

Mr Hampton: Let's see if we can cut through here. Let's see if we can cut through. Premier, this would be the briefing note that was prepared for the Ministry of the Solicitor General. This cover on it means that it went to cabinet office and that people in your office would have known about it. This is what the report says. The briefing note clearly states that "legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased with interest shown in video gambling machines."

Anybody who even glanced at this casually would immediately have had a red light go off, and the red light would have signalled that there's a problem here, that merely trying to legalize video slot machines is not going to take out organized crime; in fact legalizing video slot machines is going to be a more open invitation than ever to organized crime.

So, Premier, let me ask you, didn't any of this occur to you? Didn't it occur to you that by legalizing these slot machines you might be climbing into bed with organized crime? Didn't that thought pass before your mind?

Hon Mr Harris: No, that thought has never passed before my mind. By having legal authority and control and more resources, our intention was to avoid organized crime, to avoid any illegal activity with all these forms of gambling — with break-open tickets that you left uncontrolled for so long; with bingos, where you were a disgrace in not responding to the illegal activity taking place.

For you to suggest that the report says — and I've not read it; maybe you've read the report. I doubt it says that getting involved in legalized VLTs would in fact invite organized crime. What I understand the report said, and as it was explained to me, it said it doesn't, all on its own, eliminate organized crime. That is why we have a whole strategy. We've asked the Solicitor General and the Attorney General for far more resources to be put into the whole area of controlling not only organized crime but all crime dealing with gambling.

Mr Hampton: I advise the Premier to read the briefing note, because it tells him that his whole strategy on video slot machines is wrong and it is an even greater invitation to organized crime than it has had before. But I suspect that's okay, because what you really want is the money.

JOB CREATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My second question to the Premier is about the very bad announcement last week from Statistics Canada that 35,000 jobs were lost in Ontario in September. Of the job loss across Canada, three quarters of the jobs lost were in Ontario, and in fact, if you look at the notes, they acknowledge that there are 57,000 fewer jobs in Ontario today than there were a year ago at this time.

My question to the Premier is, what do you intend to do about the loss of 35,000 jobs in Ontario in the month of September?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): There was the report of the monthly statistics, which concerned us greatly, as it concerned the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister indicated he felt that the trends were positive, that this was a blip and that overall we should expect to see very positive gains. For you to stand up and say year over year — when the same statistics say there are, I think, close to 100,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario alone. Where you come up with your statistic of 57,000 I do not know, but Statistics Canada says all the trends are positive; Ontario is leading the way. Statistics Canada also says we're looking at 100,000 net new jobs in this province of Ontario.

Do the individual monthly statistics concern the federal government and our government? Of course they do. Any single person unemployed in this province concerns me, and we're going to do everything we can to make sure they have a job.

Mr Hampton: The reality is that we should enjoy job growth throughout the summer and we should enjoy job

growth in September. The reality is that when the Americans have interest rates at an all-time low and they are pouring gasoline on their economy to create as many jobs as they can going into a US presidential election, Ontario should be creating literally tens of thousands of jobs each month.

1410

My simple question to the Premier is this: Ontario lost 35,000 jobs in September. Three quarters of the total job loss in Canada was in Ontario. Premier, what are you going to do about the loss of 35,000 jobs in Ontario in a month when we should be creating jobs?

Hon Mr Harris: Since this is exactly the same question, the same answer applies, so if Hansard wants to repeat it to the supplementary, I'd be happy if they'd do that.

I find it passing strange that here's the leader of a party who, when he was campaigning for the leadership of the party, said: "Our first priority has to be to restore the labour relations agenda. The second priority is to get control over the economy. The third priority is to pass legislation which gives workers control over their pension funds. Finally, we need to restore the equity agenda." Nothing about jobs. You didn't seem to care about jobs, which is why we lost 10,000 jobs through your five-year mandate. Our whole agenda is to bring jobs and growth and prosperity back to Ontario, and we'll continue to work on that.

Mr Hampton: This may be news to the Premier, but having good labour relations in Ontario might mean that the auto industry would be working full-time. Having some control over our pension funds —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Obviously I hit a nerve with the Conservative caucus. They don't want good labour relations in the province. I fear I have offended a nerve here. The fact of the matter is, if we had good labour legislation in this province, we would have fewer strikes and lockouts, we'd have more people working. You might want to think about that. Furthermore, if we had some organized strategy for the investment of pension funds, we might be using pension funds to create jobs rather than to kill them, which seems to be happening under your government.

Premier, you still haven't given us an answer. Your phoney tax scheme isn't working. Your phoney tax scheme is giving tax breaks to the really well-off, but it's killed 35,000 jobs in the month of September: jobs in the small business sector, jobs in the service sector and jobs in the construction sector. I merely ask you, since your phoney tax scheme isn't working, what are you going to do to create jobs in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: For all the puffery of the policies of the NDP, let me just set the record straight on two of them. Number one, in 1995 in Ontario there were 110 strikes during the first eight months. During the first eight months of 1996, there were 79.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Mike, unemployment is up again. Your policies are not working.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York, come to order.

Hon Mr Harris: There have been fewer strikes in the province of Ontario since our government took over and changed the disastrous labour legislation you brought in, so let's just set the record straight.

Let me also set the record straight on job creation. During the member's period, over five years we lost 10,000 jobs. To date, we have created close to 100,000 — well on our way to the 725,000 target we set for our five years.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Premier. You just said that legalized gambling will not invite illegal gambling into the province. I attended all of the meetings of the justice committee on Bill 75, and that's contrary to what any expert said, which was that any increase in gambling will also invite illegal gambling to flourish in Ontario. If you're really concerned about the infiltration of the criminal element into both legal and illegal gambling in the province with 20,000 slot machines being put in, will you withdraw Bill 75, which enables slot machines to be put all across this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No.

Mr Crozier: Premier, I wouldn't have expected much more of an answer from you than that, because to pay for your tax cut, I think you have to have these video slot machines across this province.

For two weeks now, Bill 75 has been on the docket to be discussed and has been held back. I think that's prudent. I think a more prudent move, if you're really concerned about illegal gambling and what slot machines can do to the social fabric in this province, is that you would withdraw Bill 75. I give you one more opportunity to simply slough it off. Will you withdraw Bill 75?

Hon Mr Harris: Thank you very much for the second opportunity. The answer is still no.

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'd like to return to the issue of your report on child care reform and the proposals contained therein. As you know, one of the proposals is with respect to the elimination of much of the wage subsidy grant program that currently exists, and suggests that that money would be used to create 12,000 new subsidized spaces.

I'd like to understand how you arrive at that commitment, at that calculation, because as your government continues to cut transfer payments to municipalities, we in fact are losing spaces every day. I'd like to give you a couple of examples.

From the Woodstock Sentinel-Review last week, we see headlines: "Day Care Centres Closing: City Council Votes to Close Facilities in Woodstock and Ingersoll." Talking with officials there, the reason comes back to the cost pressures within the system and the absolute cut in transfers that they have experienced and their concerns with respect to that. They also have concerns about what might happen with your proposals.

That's similar to Metro Toronto, Minister, where they're looking at \$11.3 million being taken out of their system, and they say your proposal would cost 10,000 subsidy child care spaces.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Lankin: Minister, I would like you to explain to us, how exactly did you arrive at this calculation of 12,000 new subsidized spaces?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. The first thing I would like to point out about the report is that they are proposals, general directions, and that what we are now doing is getting input and consulting with those groups that are most involved in this before we make any final decisions. I think there are a number of questions and a lot of other detailed information that we would certainly need before we decide how we want to spend and finalize the proposals for the \$600 million we have allocated for child care.

Ms Lankin: Minister, if you're consulting with people, you've got to give them information so they can respond to your proposals. Don't you get it? We don't understand how you can say that this proposal is going to create 12,000 new subsidized places in Ontario. Municipalities are cutting spaces every day as we speak because they no longer have the money to support their portion of the child care subsidies, their share. So if they can't take up new subsidies, if they don't have the money, we're not going to see 12,000 new spaces. In fact, we're going to see a continuation of a decrease in the number of spaces that are available to working families.

Minister, you've got a responsibility to provide some detail to people and to truly consult. We are still unable to get a list from your office of those groups that you're going to consult with. This is not a public consultation.

Tonight, Minister, I'm watching a series of hearings across this province. The first one's here in Toronto at Queen's Park at 6 o'clock. Why don't you come? I'm inviting you. Why don't you come? Why don't you listen to the presentations that are made? Why don't you talk with us in the child care community? We'd like to have you there. Minister, will you attend our hearings tonight?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I guess if the member wants to know the groups of individuals that I will be consulting, as I pointed out to her some days ago here in the House, I would urge her to look at the report, where I spent many, many months consulting with many, many groups, some of whom had never been let in the door under the previous administration. Those are the same groups that I'm going to be back consulting with.

I don't think there's any secret. I hadn't been aware that the member was bugging my office for a list that's already public, but if she'd like another copy of it, I'd be more than pleased to give it to her.

I remain committed to consulting on the child care report. I had thought that since the report came out late last summer it might not be a bad idea for the organizations to have some time to review it before I ask them for their comments. So we are now asking them for their comments and we will be listening to their input as we move through before we make final decisions on what is a very important issue.

1420

BUILDING CODE

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As you know, Minister, we have relied for many years on the Ontario building code to set minimum standards for health, safety and accessibility for construction in Ontario. I've heard recently that you are undertaking a review of the Ontario building code and I wonder if you could tell the House a bit more about the consultative process and what the government hopes to achieve by reviewing the code.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Kitchener for his question. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is proposing more than 650 changes to the Ontario building code so that we can encourage growth and more jobs in Ontario. What we're looking for is to create a more cost-effective building code that has the back-to-basics focus of health, safety and accessibility for persons with disabilities.

We've sent copies of our proposal to more than 1,500 stakeholders and we're looking forward to hearing from them. We ask for their comments by December 20.

Mr Wettlaufer: In my riding over the past couple of years I've been in apartment buildings and commercial buildings with inadequate access for the disabled. Yet I understand concerns have been raised that the government intends to reduce or eliminate sections of the Ontario building code that ensure access for the disabled. Would you please tell the House, Minister, whether the anticipated changes will reduce standards ensuring access?

Hon Mr Leach: Again I thank the member for the question. Nothing could be further from the truth. This government is not going to do anything that would eliminate provisions which ensure access for persons with disabilities. In fact this government is committed to improving access for persons with disabilities. The government remains fully committed to an Ontario building code that provides for full accessibility, and we have absolutely no plans to reduce the current standards.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you are aware, the Hamilton Civic Hospitals and the Chedoke-McMaster merged into the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp. This merger means that there are 8,000 employees now under the jurisdiction of this corporation.

It was reported last week that approximately 2,000, or 25%, of the total workforce in these hospitals, front-line health care workers, could be laid off as a result of your funding cuts. Can you explain to the House how you can justify the layoff of 2,000 front-line health care workers and believe that keeps your commitment of no cuts to hospitals and how it does not jeopardize the health of citizens in my community?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): That comment was made by Mr Scott Rowand, who is the new CEO of the health services corporation. Mr Rowand was former

CEO of Wellesley Hospital, so I make no comment on his speculation. I don't know on what basis that comment was founded and I bet today he regrets making that comment.

Mr Agostino: I can maybe enlighten the minister on the basis that Mr Rowand made the comment. In yesterday's interview, he said the 25% loss in jobs matches the 18% cuts in provincial funding announced by the government in its economic statement: "These are the funding directions we have to work with. This is the making of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp. It's provincial policy."

Minister, it is very clear that Mr Rowand made those comments on the basis of the funding cuts which your government has announced and his assessment of the situation where he believes that, as a result of the 18% cut that you have given to those hospitals in Hamilton, 2,000 employees, front-line workers, nurses, nurses' aides, people who work directly in the hospital will have to be laid off. It's very clear why Mr Rowand made those comments. He made those comments because of what you have told the hospital to do.

Minister, again, how can you sit there and justify these cuts and can you again explain how you believe that the loss of 2,000 jobs in the health care sector in Hamilton-Wentworth is not going to jeopardize the health care of citizens in my community?

Hon Mr Wilson: I don't know on what basis Mr Rowand justifies those comments. It's certainly not been the case to that extent in terms of displaced workers throughout the province.

We also remind members that the first major investment by this government — in fact the largest investment in the history of modern-day health care in Ontario — was \$170 million that we made this year into community-based services to create 4,400 jobs for nurses, homemakers and other people in community-based services.

Health care is a growing field in this province as the population gets older and grows, and there will be additional jobs in community-based services. Some 3,000 nurses have already gone through or are in training through the Health Sector Training and Adjustment Panel. They're preparing for those new jobs in community-based services.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to introduce a former member for Hamilton West in the members' gallery, Mr Richard Allen. Welcome.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): My question is to the minister responsible for privatization. Of course, I would wish to add my congratulations to the many he has received and is still receiving on his important appointment.

We hear rumours and comments from people in the executive council in the government vis-à-vis the prospects at Ontario Hydro. I read in not one, nor two, but three papers this morning that Ontario Hydro's privatization has been put on the back burner for as long as two

or three years. What Ontarians need to know, and need to know now, is, will you privatize all or some of the \$42 billion in assets of Ontario Hydro? What is your timetable? When will you do it? How will you do it? Tell me.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I want to thank the honourable member very much for the kind words. I suspect that might be the last time I hear kind words from him in the House.

The important issue to deal with here is that before we proceed with any particular privatization candidate we need to clearly understand what the process is we're going to go through. It's important, from what we've been able to determine, that the process should be as open, honest and clear as possible so that Ontarians can understand completely how we come to our decision as it relates to any privatization candidate. Clearly we're not going to move ahead on any privatization option until we have that process set.

Mr Pouliot: It's obvious that the minister has as much difficulty giving us a straight answer as he has receiving a compliment. Farmers, small business people, people who pay for the juice, all they wish to know is, will you or will you not privatize Ontario Hydro? Stop dancing; it does not become you. Tell us the straight answer. Tell us the truth. If you don't have any plans, we will understand. If you have some plans, we want to know. Will you, yes or no, privatize Ontario Hydro?

Hon Mr Sampson: I thank the honourable member. From reading Hansard in the past, I won't take dancing lessons from him, that's for sure.

Clearly, as I said earlier, what we want to do is make sure we have a process that's fair and open. The member wants us to address candidates well in advance of the potential process being established. That's putting the cart before the horse. We will be prepared to deal with candidates once we have a process established that Ontarians can understand and that is open and fair and deals with the opportunities available to us in privatization as clearly as possible.

1430

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. You are aware of how important the grape and wine industry is to the province of Ontario. You also know how important the industry is to the Niagara region and to my riding in particular.

The Ontario grape growers and grape and wine industry have always brought their concerns forward in a positive and constructive manner, something I'm sure the opposition could learn from. I have a document here which the Ontario grape growers presented to the Niagara Conservative caucus with very grave concern. I might add that the member for St Catharines was in attendance at the Niagara Conservative caucus, and as a result of that meeting I know he's going to cross the floor at any time because he really believes in what our government is doing.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question, please.

Mr Froese: That document states that the federal Liberal government is changing its pest management regulatory agency's approach to doing business. After reducing the agency's budget by over \$14 million —

The Speaker: Order. The question has been put.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I got from that question that the honourable member for St Catharines is considering crossing the floor; I'm not sure whether that was part of the question. I believe it has to do with the harmonization of pesticides and herbicides that are of important —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Harmonization of the pesticide industry at the federal and provincial level is being worked on as we speak. It's very important because the federal government has brought in legislation that will charge the farmers some \$10 million to further analyse the residues and what have you. We believe that to treat farmers well we must harmonize, and whenever we approve at the federal level, it should be very well approved here in Ontario.

Mr Froese: I wonder if the minister could tell me and the House if he believes that there's a better way of remaining competitive while at the same time reducing costs — doing better for less.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Of course, we all have to do better for less. The private sector has done that for a long time; governments are now starting to do it. It's important that this House recognize that indeed the federal government must recognize the research and development done in other jurisdictions such as the United States and Europe. Once they recognize that, there would be a lot less duplication and the costs to the farmer would be considerably reduced. We are supportive of this. I certainly hope that the federal government is listening and is indeed supportive of that type of action as well.

ONTARIO-QUEBEC CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AGREEMENT

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I have a question for the Minister of Labour concerning this government's latest agreement in principle with the Quebec government on construction mobility between the two provinces. You deserve congratulations for the effort you have put into this. But the grade is not as high for the final result. Late Thursday in Ottawa, during your speech at the Ottawa Construction Association, you said that Ontario's goal through these long and difficult negotiations was to achieve a more level playing field for Ontario contractors and workers. I must say that a level playing field has not been reached. Even though Quebec says it will recognize the Ontario construction workers' certification, only 10% of the Ontario workers in the residential area are unionized.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Lalonde: Very few Ontarians have an Ontario competency card. According to this agreement in principle, to work in Quebec Ontarians will still have to join a union in Quebec. Will Quebec construction workers

working in Ontario have to obtain their Ontario card to work in Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): To the member for Prescott-Russell: As I indicated in my comments at the lunch in Ottawa on Thursday, I appreciated very much the efforts of all members of the eastern Ontario caucus. I think the fact that we were able to obtain a much more level playing field really was the result of many people working together.

I would indicate to you that we realize there is more that needs to be done. That's why, as soon as we had agreed in principle to the agreement — our officials, I can assure you, are continuing to work by phone and they will be meeting to make sure that the deal is implemented. Also, we have been given assurance by the Quebec Minister of Labour that this will go through the Legislature of Quebec this fall. We are confident that there will be more equal access and that our people will be able to get jobs in Quebec.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, last Friday, the day after your speech, some contractors were furious about this agreement. They contacted the Quebec union office and were told that they still have to meet two conditions and some requirements. This was said on TV Thursday night. Minister, can you tell this House what the two conditions and the Commission de la construction du Québec requirements are that Ontario contractors have to meet?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you well know, there was a reduction as far as the elimination of the competency exam. Our contractors no longer have to write the competency exam, and that was quite an insult to our very well qualified contractors. However, they will continue to need to demonstrate that they are indeed qualified construction contractors, so that information will need to be provided to the CCQ.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training following from comments made by his leader, the Premier, in Sault Ste Marie last week.

The Premier is quoted as saying that he was sympathetic to the holding of an inquiry into the Deluca scandal. He said, "We'd like to see if we can't get at it faster than what some are telling us is possible." What does "faster" mean? Is the ministry prepared to move forward with an inquiry into the Deluca affair immediately, or what is the time frame?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the honourable member for the question. I think all those who are familiar with the Deluca affair are saddened by it. I know that all my colleagues are and I'm sure the member opposite is as well.

I believe, as do my colleagues, that it's important that children in this province are safe in their schools. Obviously we as a government, and I'm sure every person in this chamber, would like to do anything we can to ensure that safety can be done. As the member alluded to, there is conflicting legal advice on this file.

There is currently a civil case going on. We're monitoring that civil case, and I can assure the member opposite that as soon as it is practical, we will make a decision and an announcement on a possible inquiry.

Mr Wildman: I'm afraid the minister has not answered the question. This is a very serious matter, as the minister knows. All of us are concerned about the safety of our children, both in school and outside of school. All of us recognize that an inquiry might shed light on how it was possible that a teacher could remain teaching in a system for 20 years, and subsequently we find that teacher pleading guilty to 14 counts of sexual assault. We need to know how this happened so we can ensure it does not ever happen again in any board, public or separate, across this province. What does the minister mean? When is "as soon as practicable"?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I think the member opposite has put the question well. This surely is a circumstance that's repugnant to us all. We too wonder how this could have happened. However, I'm sure that the member opposite will know from his time in government that when a matter is before the courts, ministers are limited in what can be said.

We are monitoring the situation now. We are inquiring into what time frame the civil action might take and what the appropriate actions of this government should be. I can assure the member opposite that this has my attention, certainly my concern and my deep empathy.

1440

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines. Minister, as you're well aware, the tourism industry in Ontario is very dependent upon the continued health of the provincial parks system. I understand that you have a new management model for the provincial parks system. Could you let us know how that model is coming along?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for that question. As he and the members of the Legislature know, we have over 265 parks in Ontario, some of the finest parks throughout the whole world, and we operate over 100 of those parks.

Earlier this year, on May 1, we announced Ontario Parks. It's a new way to fund our parks. What it essentially entails is that when you pay money to go in to see one of our parks, that money stays within a special account and goes towards all of Ontario's parks. The incentive now is to attract more people to use our parks, and I would encourage members of this Legislature and also the public watching to take advantage of Ontario's parks. They're the best in the world, and we want to make them better for today and for future generations.

Mr Grimmett: The supplementary question has to do with the methods of marketing that the province is now using for its provincial parks. Has the ministry considered taking out a Web site for the provincial parks marketing plan?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay will be pleased to know that the answer is yes. Back in July, MNR, in our parks division, took advantage of the latest technology to promote our parks system, which we're very proud of and all the people of Ontario should be proud of. The Internet site is www.mnr.gov.on.ca. Since it was announced in July and put on the Net, 13,858 people have visited the site. This is just the tip of the iceberg of ways that we're trying to improve Ontario's parks system.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): My question today is for the Premier. Any day now you are going to be asking us in this House to approve the introduction of 20,000 video slot machines into every bar and restaurant across this province. For the last two weeks, we have been asking your government for the contents of the criminal intelligence report that warns the people of Ontario of the dangers of this introduction of video slot machines across this province. The report says that "legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling in this province."

Premier, when the police are giving us such a warning, don't you think the people of Ontario and their representatives, we in this House, should have that information before we give that approval?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'll refer that to the Solicitor General.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I indicated in the House last week and when this issue was raised originally that this is a report by an arm's-length, self-regulating body, the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. I suggest respectfully that the member opposite consider directing a question to that organization. This is not a government report, we have no responsibility for this report, and we do not have the ability to release it.

Mr Ramsay: The minister now is hanging his hat on this report, but he has seen — as he only now admits, 30 minutes after the last question period here, finally — a sanitized version in this briefing note of this report, and yet this minister is denying the standing committee on administration of justice of this Legislature access to this information so that we can make the proper decisions and recommendations for the people of Ontario.

Minister, you should at least be able to allow us in the justice committee, in an in camera session, to have the appropriate officials come forward and bring these concerns, or else I think it would be clear that you are suppressing this information because you have a greedy government here and you're looking for dollars to pay for your tax cut. Now give us that opportunity and let us look at that in the justice committee.

Hon Mr Runciman: We have had numerous incidents through the past history of governments of various political stripes with respect to solicitors general or ministers of the crown approaching the police or officials within the justice system and ultimately resigning because of those approaches, and governments of all political stripes have supported that there should continue to be

that sort of separation between the political arm and the justice system itself.

The press comments with respect to the Criminal Intelligence Service report, as the Premier indicated earlier, were out in the media in March of this year. The committee met and, to my knowledge, did not call on Chief Fantino or any representative of CISO to make an appearance, or any member of the policing community, as I understand it. So the opportunity was there, if indeed they had this interest. I think they're looking for some political gain by raising this issue today. This is not a government report. We have no authority to release a non-government report.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week your ministry held meetings with people from the disabled community to discuss the income support reform project, and in particular to discuss the guaranteed support plan for people with disabilities. We've been talking to people who were at that meeting. To say they are upset is an understatement. They feel betrayed. In the proposals you put forward there is a proposal for a new definition of "disability," much stricter, much tougher. What it means is that if you proceed with this, you'll be throwing tens of thousands of people off the rolls of disability support, even under your new program, and leaving them uncovered under the system.

People raised this concern with your ministry bureaucrats who were there. They were told that the definition is being drafted in a climate of fiscal restraint —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Lankin: — and that there are political realities to consider. Well, there are people realities to consider, those disabled people who will be cut off support.

Why don't you just be very honest with us? What is your proposal about? Is it not about finding a way to pay for the tax cut your government is giving to the wealthy, and in fact is punishing those people who are disabled in order to accomplish that goal?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): The definition of "disabled" under the proposals we have — there is no final definition. That's why we are consulting to get the input that I think is very important before we make any decisions. The other point I'd like to make is that the definition is being looked at to be redefined in the interests of finding a definition that works better for the disabled, not in the interests of saving money.

Ms Lankin: Those people from the disabled community who were at that meeting made it very clear to your ministry that the proposal doesn't work in the interest of persons with disabilities. In fact there are many people who are currently under the category of permanently unemployable who would be thrown off the rolls of support, who would no longer have access to government support even though they couldn't go out and work, even though they couldn't qualify under other programs of the

government. You're not making things better; you're just casting people off to the side. Again, it comes back to dollars and cents.

When they asked the ministry why you would be moving down this road with restrictive words like "severely" and others where you know that people will be disqualified as a result, they were told that the bottom line was a fiscal imperative and a political reality. What about the reality of those people's lives? Minister, on everything I ask you about in this House, your answer is, "It's a proposal, it's a proposal."

The Speaker: Question, please.

Ms Lankin: The people in the bureaucracy say this proposal's coming down the track like a train. It's got to be stopped. Will you commit today that you will not change the definition of "disability" in a way that will disqualify people who are currently in receipt of those supports, who need those supports, who need your government to care about them?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the officials who may or may not have said what the member says they are supposed to have said, they're not the ones who are making the decision on this. It's the minister, it's cabinet, it's caucus who make the decision on any changes that may or may not occur with services for the disabled. We made a commitment to the disabled that we would be designing a new income-support program to better meet their needs and we stand by that commitment.

There has been concern expressed about the label "permanently unemployable," because many members of the disabled community objected to that. They felt they were able to contribute and did not want to be labelled permanently unemployable. That also means there are some in the system who cannot be employed and have disabilities that mean they need support, and this government is committed to supporting them. We are not going to be throwing people off the system.

1450

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. The auditor released his report at 1:30 this afternoon and in it there are three recommendations that affect your ministry:

"Eliminate areas of...duplication of programs, services and administration between the province and the federal government; complete arrangements to ensure that timely, reliable labour market information is available and used to make effective program and resource allocation decisions; and revise funding arrangements with delivery agents to make use of more results-based approaches and to achieve savings of as much as \$17 million annually."

I wonder if you could respond to these recommendations and comment on how they jibe with your current plans within your ministry.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Scarborough East for the question. We have taken note of the auditor's comments, particularly with regard to those things we have already done to improve the training system in Ontario. We've eliminated the bloated governance

structure which has paralysed training in Ontario over the last few years, we've eliminated the blatantly wasteful duplication in programs, we are spending \$310 million on training in Ontario and we're working very hard with our federal counterparts to make sure the two systems of training mesh for the benefit of people who require entry into the workworld. I'm very proud of our record on training.

Mr Gilchrist: In light of the fact that this report has just come out, I wonder if you can give an indication to the House of the timing for any further moves you'll make to bring into play within your ministry as many of these recommendations as possible.

Hon Mr Snobelen: We have a lot of work to do to make the kind of improvements that are necessary in our post-secondary system and in our training system in Ontario. I'm proud of the steps we've taken already. As the member probably knows, we have a discussion paper out working on what public policy should be on the future of colleges and universities. That report will come in to us in mid-December; December 15 is the timing for that report. We look to make some further progressive steps post that report being filed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Perhaps you can help me with this; I don't know. The executive director of the Gaming Control Commission of Ontario, Duncan Brown, has been able to get a copy of the report to which we made reference in this House. We've asked the Premier about it, we've asked the Solicitor General, we've asked the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Could you explain to us how someone outside of this House —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's a good question, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: It is a good question, but the fact of the matter is that it's not anywhere within my realm to try to get that information or explain to you how to go about getting it. Maybe in a previous life I could have helped you, but as of today I can't.

VISITORS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I am pleased to announce in the gallery a Leaside High School grade 10 history class, including my own daughter, Leslie Ann.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's way out of order too, but we welcome Leaside High School.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTION

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I move that the following substitution be made to the membership:

On the standing committee on the Ombudsman, Mrs Ross be substituted for Mr Stockwell.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is the motion carried? Carried.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Petitions. The member for Sudbury.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Thank you, Mr Speaker —

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I had kindly agreed to sit down, simply because you had made an error in judgement.

The Speaker: The member for Parkdale, go ahead. Petitions, the member for Parkdale.

Mr Ruprecht: I had said I was agreeable —

The Speaker: The member for Parkdale, go ahead with your petition.

Mr Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that new decision. I very much appreciate that.

The Speaker: Read your petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition that speaks to the erosion of child care services in Ontario. This petition is addressed to the assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, are firmly opposed to the erosion of the child care system. We are most particularly concerned about the unregulated child care sector, which represents the choice of most Ontario families, many living in rural areas.

"We urge this government to make its budget reduction in areas where children and families will not once again be the target of cuts.

"Family resource programs support the informal sector of child care, which includes parents caring for their own children and the care provided by grandparents, home child care providers and nannies."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive petitions from workers all across Ontario opposed to the Mike Harris government's continuing attack on workers and their rights in health and safety and workers' compensation. This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the struc-

ture, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

On behalf of our caucus, I add my signature to theirs.

SMOKING AREA

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by 465 students who are seriously concerned with the impact of the smoking ban, which has created numerous problems for adjacent property owners and the students themselves. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the students at the Arnprior District High School, request a designated smoking area on school property. We feel the present situation is intolerable and will eventually result in the serious injury or death of a student.

"We recognize that littering and loitering is unacceptable and would like something to be done, like having a designated spot on the school property."

I affix my signature.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My office continues to be flooded with this petition, which is of significant importance to the people of northeastern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession impacting on the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury hospitals."

I affix my signature to the petition.

1500

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Local 2113, the Don Mills Lodge, District Lodge 78 and Airline Central Lodge 2323. The petition reads as follows:

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose any attempts to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"We demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my signature in support of this petition.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition signed by people concerned about ammunition regulations.

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the ammunition control act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records produced as a result of the provisions of Bill 181 cannot be reasonably used to track criminals and are on many occasions across Ontario where such records are kept insecurely stored and thus available for criminal use as a shopping list of homes with firearms; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, hunters, collectors and recreational shooters, those who are most affected by the legislation; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the illegal use of ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the ammunition control act, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against those who criminally misuse firearms and ammunition."

I support this petition and therefore affix my signature to it.

COMMERCE INTERPROVINCIAL

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le taux de sans-emploi au sein de l'industrie de la construction est très élevé dans toute la vallée de l'Outaouais, notamment dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton où, selon l'International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local union 586, 43 % des travailleurs syndiqués de différents métiers reliés à la construction sont au chômage ;

«Attendu que plusieurs emplois sur les chantiers de construction de l'Ontario sont comblés par des travailleurs du Québec ;

«Attendu que les travailleurs et les entrepreneurs en construction de l'Ontario font face à de nombreuses règles lorsqu'ils veulent travailler au Québec ou encore obtenir des contrats au Québec ;

«Attendu que les négociations entre l'Ontario et le Québec au cours des 20 dernières années afin d'abolir les barrières interprovinciales n'ont pas permis d'établir une parité au sein des deux provinces ;

«Nous, les soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Que le projet de loi privé, Loi de 1996 sur la main-d'œuvre de la construction du Québec, déposé à l'Assemblée législative le 4 juin 1996 par le député de Prescott et Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde, qui contribuera à créer de l'emploi et à protéger l'industrie de la construction en Ontario, soit adopté par l'Assemblée.»

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offenders;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I'm very happy to sign this petition.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has cut back spending on all social services such as education, health care, day care and other essential programs;

"Whereas the Ontario government has singled out the most vulnerable members of our society: the poor, unemployed, women, elderly, children, sick and disabled;

"Whereas these cutbacks also attack the very social fabric of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario government has violated the democratic process;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To demand an end to cutbacks to our social programs; to demand the Ontario Legislature invest in the future of Ontario by increasing investments to improve the well-being of Ontario now."

I affix my signature to that.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational disease; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT, including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeals structure with worker representation; that the WCAT be left intact; and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I add my name to theirs.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster evictions by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

I have signed the petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition regarding the spring bear hunt containing over 230 signatures. It is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and reads:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I affix my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition here that keeps coming in by the hundreds, a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster evictions by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

I affix my signature to this in agreement.

1510

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the St Catharines area that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario promised not to cut one penny from health care; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has proceeded to cut over \$1 billion in much-needed dollars from community hospitals; and

"Whereas the people of St Catharines have come to rely upon the caring, professional service provided by health care givers at the General Hospital, the Shaver Hospital and the Hotel Dieu Hospital and who view this betrayal by the Mike Harris government as an attack on quality health care services in the Niagara region; and

"Whereas the residents of St Catharines do not accept the notion that any of its hospitals should be closed, because they are essential in order to maintain a caring and humane society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government keep their election promise and restore health care spending to the level at which they promised during the last election campaign so that all three St Catharines hospitals are able to continue to provide their much-needed and valuable services."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER POLITICIANS ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996

RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE DÉPUTÉS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to reduce the number of members of the Legislative Assembly by making the number and boundaries of provincial electoral districts identical to those of their federal counterparts and to make consequential amendments to statutes concerning

electoral representation / Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à réduire le nombre des députés à l'Assemblée législative en rendant identiques le nombre et les limites des circonscriptions électorales provinciales et fédérales et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à des lois concernant la représentation électorale.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to be able to resume debate on this bill and finish the time that's left on the clock. Last Thursday, when we ended debate on this, I was talking about how to me this particular piece of legislation really addresses the wrong problem. I want to go back to some of the basic points that I think need to continue to be repeated as we look at what this bill does. For the purposes of those who are following this discussion, this is the bill that in four and a half lines essentially changes the representation to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario by making not just the boundaries but the numbers and names of those boundaries identical to the federal, ie, moving from 130 seats to 103 seats.

I have to say, as I look at this bill and continue to think about what this will do, that I see this as a pretty straightforward attack on democracy in this province. I see this as a significant erosion of the level of democracy we have in this province which, in my view, as I mentioned last week and want to reiterate today, is already in pretty significant trouble.

I know that one of the reasons the Tory members are using in their defence of this legislation is that this is showing once again, as they put it, that they are keeping the promises they made in the Common Sense Revolution. I have to say, as I said the other day, that on this one they are doing, through this piece of legislation, what they said they would do.

The question can be asked, however, why this one particular promise is being kept while other much more significant promises they made are not being kept. Therefore, why is it so important that they maintain their word to the people of the province on this bill, which reduces not just the number of MPPs but which, as I want to continue arguing, reduces the influence and level of democracy in this province?

Why are they not keeping the promise they made to the people of the province around health care, that they would not touch funding for health care, when they are taking out, over the next couple of years, \$1.3 billion of health care? Why are they not keeping the promise they made to the people of the province on not reducing funding to classroom education, when we have seen the Minister of Education not once but on two significant occasions now break that promise, first in the cuts he's already put into the system of almost \$1 billion, in just the elementary and secondary school panel, and then in his musings that another \$600 million is going to come out of the system, and continuing to pretend that isn't hurting classroom education? Why are they not keeping their promise of maintaining funding for law and order in this province? Those are to cite but three major areas where they went out of their way to say: "We are going to keep our promises. We are making these solemn promises." Yet they are breaking them.

On this one, they want to keep their promise. So it seems to me that this whole discussion, rather than being

about whether or not they're keeping their promises, really ought to be about what does this bill do. And what this bill does and why in fact they're keeping their promise on this particular piece of legislation is because what this legislation does is it shifts power. It shifts power more and more into the hands of fewer and fewer people.

That of course is quite consistent with the overall direction of this government, which, despite the promises they made on health care, on classroom education and on law and order in this province, really has everything to do with shifting wealth and power from the many across this province into the hands of a few. That's what this government is all about and that's what this particular piece of legislation does in terms of the power. It shifts that power more and more into the hands of the Premier and into the hands of the few people around the Premier.

It will make, I have no doubt about it, this Parliament even more irrelevant than it is today, because at least today there is some ability for people from across this province — from the north, from rural Ontario, from Metropolitan Toronto and the other urban centres of the province — to send representatives who at least, if nothing else, have the ability now and then to stand up and speak for their constituents. And I'm not talking just about the members in the opposition; I'm talking also about many of the members in the government caucus who are beginning to realize that the policies they are putting into place are not having the positive consequences they thought or were led to believe they would have. Yet we haven't seen things quite develop to the point where enough of them are prepared to speak their mind either in this assembly or outside of this assembly. They may be speaking their minds in the caucus meetings. Who knows? We certainly hear from time to time indications that this is happening.

But what this piece of legislation does is it reduces the ability of people to speak up for their constituents, and it does that not just because there are going to be fewer people from northern Ontario, fewer people from rural Ontario and, I might say, fewer people from Metropolitan Toronto; it will do that even more significantly because what this is is a clear sign that the number of people in this Legislature, people who are elected by the people of the province, don't matter, because all that matters is to make sure that you get the ear of the Premier and the two or three people around the Premier and that's how decisions are going to be made.

I want to say to the members opposite that in this I do not just leave my criticism at them. I criticize them severely for what they are doing in this bill because they are just playing into that notion of executive power. They are playing into that notion of saying, "The only person who matters in this assembly and across this province in the provincial scene is the Premier of the province and the few advisers he has around him and nobody else matters." In doing that, whether they realize it or not, they are destroying the last vestiges of power that those of us who are not the Premier have.

I speak to this as someone who has been around the area of power. I say this, therefore, as someone who has seen to some extent how it feels to be close to the centre

of power and then to realize that you don't have quite as much power as you thought you did. I have to say that I am coming more and more to the realization that if we do not do something significant to change the way in which we in this Legislature operate and we in this Legislature come to this place to begin with, what we are going to be seeing is simply another major step towards the significant erosion of the legislative process and the democratic process in this province. Because it doesn't matter at the end of the day, if the process continues as it does, whether you have 103 or whether you have 130, except, as I said, for the even reduced voice of the limited voice that we now have.

1520

It doesn't matter because if the only one who matters is the Premier and the few people around the Premier, then people could argue: "Why bother having the 130 members? We could in fact just do away with most of them." That I think is what is significantly wrong about this piece of legislation. It picks up on that thread, it continues that line and it goes very dangerously close to enshrining even more strongly than exists today that power in the hands of a few.

I have been saying and will continue to say and will continue to speak out on this and urge people to think seriously about what this is doing, hoping that we'll have a chance in committee to deal with this in a significant manner. Not that, quite frankly, I have any great hopes that the people of the Conservative caucus are going to change their minds, but hoping that people out there across the province still care enough about the democratic process to realize what is going on here and to realize that the problems that we have aren't being fixed by Bill 81 and quite frankly wouldn't even have been fixed if we didn't have Bill 81 in front of us; it just wouldn't get any worse.

What we need in this province is a real debate, a real, serious discussion about how we elect people to this Legislative Assembly in a way that that process of election reflects the wishes of the people. I have talked before about my great interest in proportional representation as providing some of the answers. I don't see it as the only solution. I think that we also need to look at ensuring that there are in fact greater abilities for members of this assembly, whether they're on the opposition benches or indeed on the government side, to be able to speak their minds more freely without running into the danger of being punished for that.

I think there are significant reforms that could be made, that would bring more democracy to this place and that would ensure that cynicism which this bill purports to deal with, that cynicism that's out there, which comes I believe much more as a result of people feeling more and more helpless, more and more unable to continue to have any influence over what their politicians do, than it does around the number of politicians we have in this place. I think that cynicism could only begin to be dealt with, we can only begin to provide some answers, if we ever have the courage to look at the whole process of electoral reform in this province. Until and unless we do that, we're just at best tinkering and at worst, as I

continue to emphasize with this bill, making things even worse.

It's interesting that at the same time as we are having this discussion, we've been having another discussion in the Legislative Assembly committee around the question of referenda, where again the government of the day purports to be giving people more rights, to be giving people greater say on how to influence decision-making. I say to them, if they're really serious about that, maybe one of the first things that they want to put out for referendum is the notion of changing the electoral system. Other jurisdictions, like New Zealand, have done it. They've gone to a proportional representation system, one that ensures that the people who come to this place come here reflecting proportionately the wishes of the people other there. When people say, "That just means more and more minority governments," I say, "Show me how that isn't in the best interests of the people of this province." I am interested in pursuing this discussion, but on the broader issue of electoral reform.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): In response to my colleague from Dovercourt, I listened with great interest to his speech both today and on Thursday, in addition to my colleague from Renfrew North. I appreciate there are disagreements on this bill, but I think it's important to put the motive very much on the table. I think it's very important to lead by example, that when we ask school boards to reduce their expenditures by 1.8%, that when we ask hospitals to do more with less, that we look internally at the operations of government at ministry after ministry, to say: "Listen, we need you to do more with less. We need you to make priorities." It's important that we lead by example.

What does that mean? That means that when you're looking at expenditure reductions, you as a decision-maker, as a member of the Ontario Legislature, must be part of the solution.

I think it's very important that you lead by example. How do you do that? We do that by bringing in a realistic pension scheme and getting rid of the MPPs' pension plan. We do that by cutting expenditures in this place by 20%. I think we do that, in all fairness, by looking at ourselves. In our federal Parliament, have the members provided good representation to the people of Ontario, as a rule, over the last 25 years with 99 or 103 members? I think the very clear answer is that they have. This is all about leadership by example, something that is very important, something that we haven't seen in too long.

What we're seeing is that at the federal level, for example, they're cutting billions of dollars in transfers to the provinces but aren't cutting significant amounts of money out of government administration. I think that for too long people have seen decision-makers in government exempt themselves from any reductions and haven't seen real leadership by example to say, "The buck is going to stop here, we're going to provide leadership by example and we're going to be the ones to bite the bullet." I think it's a very important message to send to the taxpayers of Ontario that we can do more with less.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I congratulate my colleague from Dovercourt for raising a number of important points, one of which is on proportional representation, which for me has always been an interest. He has expressed that many countries have that system, and I think that guarantees to many a voice they otherwise wouldn't have in their parliaments or legislatures, wherever they are. That's a theme we should explore and give more thought to, and my colleague from Dovercourt has been one of the few who has raised it consistently. I'm not sure that there's an interest by many in the Legislature to do that in this province, but at least my colleague has had the courage to raise it as a matter of interest. I hope that if there's interest on the other side, in general with the population, we'll be able to explore it.

The other matter he raised that I think is an important one, which the opposition doesn't seem to want to touch, is how this shifts power away from the members into the hands of the Premier, because this is what it really does. The member for Nepean speaks so happily about leadership and having to cut members, as if that were a great thing, but he doesn't really explain how that is going to be helpful to the various constituencies all over the province. From everything that previous speakers have said, it's not going to help the constituencies whatsoever — I will be expounding about this — but it will take power away from members and shift it to the Premier and to his staff and to some of the cabinet ministers.

If the member for Nepean thinks that's democracy, I think he's dead wrong and I think he knows that and the other members of his caucus know that. I'm not quite sure how much democracy there is in their own caucus to begin with. It would be of interest for me to hear some of their members comment on the particular democracy they have in their own caucus.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm delighted to participate in this historic and significant initiative, the Fewer Politicians Act. First and foremost I would like to commend the Premier of Ontario for once again listening to the concerns of Ontario voters and honouring another campaign commitment. This law will reduce the cost and size of government.

This legislation is, as well, a bold new step. We are creating new frontiers of representation where direct democracy is enhanced with the principle of one person, one vote. We are reaffirming that principle.

The city of Etobicoke, the leading edge of Metro, will be directly affected by this legislation. Today there are four Progressive Conservative MPPs representing Etobicoke. Because of this legislation, after the next election there will be three MPPs.

I tell you that we made a promise to the people of Ontario. Although it would be easy to break a promise, as we happened to see so often with the members opposite, we won't do that. We promised taxpayers that we would save them money. Time and again we have delivered on these promises. We have delivered in many ways — tax cuts first, the elimination of MPPs' gold-plated pension plans, and above all, we promise that we are going to deliver once again with this piece of legislation, the Fewer Politicians Act.

For the past 10 years, Ontarians have said that they are overgoverned, overrepresented, overtaxed, and they feel that every level of government has become too gargantuan, too costly and —

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired, sir. The member for Renfrew North.

1530

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to congratulate the member for Dovercourt for his remarks. Again, I think there is a confusion in this debate as between the Legislature and the government. Bill 81 seeks to reduce by 20% the size of the Legislature. I have observed before, and let me do so again, that people who have looked at the Canadian and the Ontario political scene and political cultures have observed that one of the very serious problems is the imperial Prime Minister and the imperial Premier, with altogether too much power. There is nothing in Bill 81, as the member for Dovercourt points out, to deal with that. If you are concerned about too much government, it seems to me you've got to be concerned about the kind of concentrated power that rests with the first minister and his or her unelected advisers, whether that person be Davis, Peterson, Miller or Harris. That's executive government. That is where real decision-making takes place in our system.

I pointed out the other day — let me do so again — that in 1990 it only took 37.5% of those who went to the polls to elect Premier Rae. There is absolutely nothing in the Harris electoral manifesto, including Bill 81, to deal with that problem.

The member for Dovercourt asks us to think about electoral reform. I think we ought to concern ourselves with electoral reform if we are concerned about too much power where it really counts. Getting rid of 20% of the Legislature doesn't in any way, shape or form affect the Cabinet Office and the Premier's office. I say to my friend from Dovercourt that last week's results in New Zealand and the traditional electoral results in Israel ought to give one pause about how far we ought to go with proportional representation, but there is a problem that Bill 81 does not deal with.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Silipo: I appreciate very much the comments and I wish there were more time because I think it's when we get into these exchanges that we begin to see to what extent we either are clear in explaining ourselves or are heard in what we say.

This is not, I say to the member for Nepean with all due respect, to me a question of leading by example. I appreciate that in a government that's cutting everything, every kind of service around, you need to show that you're also cutting the number of MPPs. Fine. If you have to do that because you want to show at least some consistency there, do it, but that doesn't resolve the fundamental problem that we have in terms of the lack of power that this assembly has over the government. I say that in this instance, but I could have said that — and in fact I think I did say it the other day — in talking about all other governments, so I'm not making a comment aimed just at Mike Harris, although Mike Harris is giving us lots of examples that I could use.

Therefore, I appreciate very much the comments of the member for Renfrew North as he reminds us about the difference, and that's exactly the point I've been making, which is that in order to have greater democracy, in order to really have the wishes of the people respected and reflected in an ongoing fashion, not in a symbolic way once every four or four and a half years, you need to have a system which keeps the Legislative Assembly uppermost, which keeps the Premier and the government of the day truly accountable to this institution. This is all we have, and that's why I continue to believe that a system of proportional representation at least gives us that sense because it gives people a greater ability to influence. Yes, it maybe makes things a little messier, but it's more democratic. It really is much closer to the one person/one vote that the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says he wants to get, so I'll continue to talk about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hastings: The members of the opposition keep talking about the need for fundamental electoral reform. I would simply reiterate and like to continue that this is one of the major ways of achieving fundamental electoral reform, despite what they claim opposite.

If you look at the numbers, at the actual situation, when we came to government there were 130 members in this Legislature. Once the Fewer Politicians Act has been implemented we'll be reduced to 103. We made this a commitment. It means that 27 fewer MPPs will be billing: less salary, less overhead, fewer staff and other related costs. If those aren't important items, the taxpayers of Ontario will remind you that the contrary reality is true. This move will save taxpayers an estimated \$11 million annually. That money stays with the taxpayers of this province. Indeed, Ontario's chief elections officer estimates that we will save an additional \$2 million by matching the federal riding boundaries.

We know from experience that the Liberal Party's solution to these problems is to simply add more politicians, more bureaucracy and spend more money. That spend, spend, spend policy has only increased our debt load and our deficit to the point that our children and grandchildren are going to be paying for the opposition party's mismanagement for decades to come.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon, please, only one is entitled to deliver a speech. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: When I go door-knocking each week-end, people tell me that government has become too expensive, too cumbersome and way too unresponsive to the needs of our citizenry. In response, we have achieved four significant, specific changes: appointed the smallest cabinet in Ontario's history in the last 30 years; reduced the internal administrative costs by \$200 million; scrapped the MPPs' gold-plated pension plans and tax-free allowances, further reducing their pay and saving even more money for taxpayers; reduced by \$80 million to date the costs of running agencies, boards and commissions. Furthermore, we've imposed strict limits on government advertising.

To me, Bill 81, along with the measures we've just mentioned, proves once again that this government is not

afraid to make the challenging decisions that have to be made. We have never chosen the path of least resistance, like the two previous regimes, and we are not going to start now.

Naturally the opposition are very upset, because they do not like the idea of the Harris government saving taxpayers' money. Liberal leader McLeod is a good example, and has publicly stated that to solve this problem she'd probably introduce a More Politicians Act, more representation. How exactly are we going to pay for more politicians? If the Liberals were in power, they would just raise taxes once again.

Ask the member for York South, in the leadership campaign they're undergoing, what he would do if he was elected the leader of their party. A Kennedy quotation is rather insightful and refreshing. Mr Kennedy, asked the question what he would do about this situation: "I would just raise taxes if necessary." It sounds like the same old Grit song except it's sung by a newer Grit from over the way.

Other members from the opposition benches claim the new ridings to the north will be so large that they could not adequately service all their constituents' needs. I just can't buy into that argument. Both the Liberals and the NDP support more government spending, higher taxes, more debt and deficit. You can see it in their answers every day to every situation. It's rather refreshing to see that their federal brethren in Ottawa at least, federal MPs, seem to manage very well in serving their constituents.

My response to them would be that if any opposition MPP feels he or she can't do the task, can't live up to the commitment of the task, then we'll get the Premier to have more Tories running in northern Ontario and they will undertake the task.

1540

I want to reiterate one final point, other than just the enormous savings to the Ontario taxpayer, and that is that the Fewer Politicians Act also recognizes the principle that northern Ontario is unique. Under this plan, northern Ontario has been allotted two more ridings than it would have under a pure representation by population arrangement. An overwhelming majority of my constituents support our government's plan to reduce the size and cost of government. In fact, one of the local media, the Etobicoke Guardian, supports our government's initiative, saying that it sets the stage and an example for other governments and bureaucracies to follow the same course of action. It is a leading periodical in the city of Etobicoke and sets public opinion and knows what trends are coming up.

Finally, I think this legislation is not only the right thing to be doing but is the best thing we could be doing in terms of advancing the cause of smaller and affordable government in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have the opportunity to respond to the remarks by the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. Clearly, we're seeing a perfect example of how somebody from this part of the province in southern Ontario does not understand northern Ontario, and obviously is reading words written by somebody else as well, I might say. It's interesting too, because if you

go back and you find some quotes by his colleague Ernie Eves — there was a debate on this issue back in 1987 — Mr Eves is stated as saying: "In fact, a round trip from the town of Parry Sound to the town of Deep River is an eight-hour undertaking. It goes without saying that this travel time alone would render effective representation by one MPP very difficult, if not virtually impossible." That's Mr Eves speaking almost 10 years ago.

Let me make it very clear to the member: Those of us in the north are very capable of handling our ridings and dealing with them in a very effective way, and we're very proud of what we can do. The problem may be in terms of constituents being able to get to us. When you have a riding such as Thunder Bay, such as Port Arthur which will become Port Arthur-Nipigon, we understand, we're talking about adding eight other communities — Nipigon, Red Rock, Geraldton, Longlac — a whole number of communities that we will make every attempt to meet and greet and go and see, but it's a question of them being able to get to us and the member obviously does not understand that and obviously has no idea about the reality of distances, the reality of even literally trying to reach us by a 1-800 number.

We are more than capable of handling our ridings. We will continue to handle our ridings in a very effective fashion. But it's very clear that by reducing the number of ridings in northern Ontario from 15 to 10 they are simply trying to reduce the voice we can put across to northerners, the voice we want to send along down here to Queen's Park.

Clearly the member here has no understanding what the reality of distance and geography does to our constituents, but please be assured our voices will be just as loud and clear. We will fight just as vigorously, but by no means will this be as fair a setup for the people we represent.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to emphasize in response to the member that the comments that are being made on this side of the House are not being made on behalf of members of the Legislature; they're being made on behalf of the members of our constituencies, our constituents, the people who live in Ontario.

The member makes the argument that by doing this we are cutting government. We are not. We are cutting the Legislature. He says we will be saving money. He points out \$11 million and perhaps another \$2 million. But I think it's important, as has been said previously in this debate, to recognize that this is a companion piece. The other piece of legislation that is coming later is on referenda. The argument is being made that because of advances in technology the electors out there should be able to make decisions directly, by direct democracy, by voting on the issues of the day that are of utmost importance. The point is that this does not save money. The point is that a referendum at minimum would cost between \$23 million and \$40 million, according to Mr Bailie, the chief election officer. In one referendum you spend at least twice as much as you save in this whole process of lowering the number of seats. So it isn't about saving money.

What we're talking about is how we properly represent the people of Ontario and how the people of Ontario

properly have a say in the decisions of government. It can be argued that direct democracy is the way to go, but if that is the agenda, then it is not an agenda about saving money. Government, legislatures, democracy cost money. The question is, how do we get the best representation for that money?

Mr Conway: It has been much said in this debate that what the Ontario Conservative government of Mr Harris has done is precisely what the federal parliament did in its most recent Representation Act. That is not true in one very important respect. In its most recent federal redistribution the Parliament of Canada, in my view quite properly, made specific allowance for large areas like the territories and rural communities like Prince Edward Island. It was that calculation that was clear.

Prince Edward Island, for example, was guaranteed four seats with the so-called senatorial clause. Prince Edward Island has 132,000 people. The Yukon and Northwest Territories are guaranteed three seats in the federal proposal, though they've only got 95,000 people in the two territories. My point is that the federal plan made at least some considerable allowance for one of the fundamental realities of Ontario and Canadian life, namely, geography.

I accept entirely that geography alone is not to determine the electoral map — there must be a very real regard for representation by population — but I say again that the federal redistribution made some reasonable effort to come to terms with the very real problems and pressures of Canadian geography. We make no provisions for our own Prince Edward Island and for our own Yukon Territory. That is my major complaint with Bill 81, and let me say that we as a Legislature, and you as a government, play with fire if we fail to understand the regional imperative in the Canadian political culture.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Our colleague the member for Renfrew North, as is the Liberal wont, has come down on both sides of the issue, and that can be very painful, I'm sure. The bottom line is that the only reason the non-partisan federal electoral commission recognizes such dramatic inequities as the number of seats in Prince Edward Island is because they are entrenched in the Constitution and in its predecessor. The bottom line is that there are no similar constraints anywhere else across Canada outside of the Maritimes, and so it is a totally flawed argument to suggest that because things are messed up in Prince Edward Island we should continue to have complete foulups here in Ontario.

The bottom line is that there is a consideration. They did make allowances for the geography in northern Ontario. A strict representation by population would have had nine seats; there are instead 11. That is an 18% allowance. If your suggestion is that the people in southern Ontario should have their vote depreciated by even more than 18%, then please come out and articulate that clearly. To couch this in terms of noble rhetoric about the Northwest Territories and Prince Edward Island has absolutely nothing to do with the distribution of population throughout Ontario.

The fact of the matter is that the greatest variance under the new boundaries will be a ratio of from 1 to 1.4. As it stands right now, the ratio is from 1 to 5. There are

ridings in northern Ontario where members have five times the voting power per person that somebody in, say, Markham or Woodbridge has. I don't think the people in the towns of Markham and Woodbridge should have their vote depreciated just to make allowances of the extent that are being proposed by the other two parties. An 18% differential obviously recognizes the different costs and the different time considerations for members in the north, and that's allowance enough.

1550

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, you have two minutes.

Mr Hastings: It's interesting to note that members opposite can't seem to get their arguments straight. For example, they claim that we represent constituents or voters. Fine, that's a good starting principle. But we do not represent geography. We do not represent the Canadian Shield. I've never had a letter, and I don't think any of the members opposite ever had a letter, written by somebody that is the Canadian Shield or rock itself. Really, really nonsense.

Mr Wildman: Did you ever have to travel across it, you moron?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Algoma, please.

Mr Wildman: I withdraw the remark, Mr Speaker.

Mr Hastings: For somebody who comes from southern Ontario it might be rather revealing if the members opposite listened a little more. For example, in terms of distance, I have been in northern Ontario countless times and therefore I would suggest we're a little more intellectually connected than perhaps even the member for Algoma. It takes 21 hours to drive, almost without getting out of your car to get gas, from Thunder Bay to Toronto, if you had to do it and do it within the speed limit, and I've done it at least twice. In terms of distance and representation, we're intimately understanding of the geography of northern Ontario.

It seems passing bizarre that the members opposite, especially the member for Algoma, speak about the Legislature as if it were some separate, independent and isolated component of the whole governmental process when it is part of government. It makes decisions. He's been here for at least 22 years. He was a minister so he was part of the executive council. Is he arguing that the executive council isn't even part of government, part of the bureaucracy? They're all interconnected.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Peter North (Elgin): This is an ideal time to jump into this particular debate. I want to speak to this debate because I think it's important to understand that withdrawing the services of 27 rural and northern ridings in this Legislature has substantial drawbacks. The government argues that this is a major cost saving, that this was a promise and that if it's good enough for the feds, it's good enough for us. Why should we be different?

I believe there are substantial differences between the federal and provincial governments. Federal issues, by their very nature, have become very limited. As provinces continue to wrest control of various programs and responsibilities, federal jurisdiction will become even more limited. With that limited responsibility comes a

federal riding redistribution to deal with those issues and constituents appropriately.

Provincial politicians are dealing with more issues than ever before. They are dealing with municipal government more than ever before. Members are inclined to deal with all these issues on a much more constrained member's budget. I find it difficult to believe that adding 20,000 to 25,000 constituents to a member's caseload in these circumstances will go any measure towards grass-roots representation.

Having spoken with one particular constituent in the past few days on this particular issue, I want to reiterate his concerns with regard to the issues:

"Everywhere I call I get voice mail. As the government consolidates more systems into less, I continue to find myself more distance from government. Yet I pay more. Does this mean I'll get voice mail at your office too? Well, I guess it makes sense when you withdraw as many services as they are from rural and northern Ontario. What would you need a voice in rural or northern Ontario for in their minds? A voice that no longer exists."

Many of the members I have spoken to on the government side tell me, "Pete, this was a promise we made in the Common Sense Revolution and we intend to keep our promises." I understand what you're saying completely, because like you I have made promises myself to my constituents — not to the party, not to the leadership, not to the government, but to my constituents. I believe that beyond anything else the people who put us here matter most. For this government many of the people who put them here were from rural Ontario. Although you can say that you told them you were going to decrease the number of MPPs by 24% in your rural economic development document, reading this document filled with many more promises of rural Ontario's greater voice certainly doesn't leave them with the impression you would eliminate the very voice you were asking them to elect.

I want to read something to you. It says here, "The feeling of frustration and alienation is intense in rural Ontario." Probably some of the fellows on the other side will recognize this particular document.

"Residents feel their concerns are being ignored, and policymakers in distant urban areas have no understanding of the real issues. Decisions are frequently being made for the benefit of the greater Toronto area and do not adequately reflect the realities of smaller Ontario municipalities.

"In response to the growing discontent in rural Ontario, the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development was launched in August 1993. This report is the result of townhall forums across the province and expresses the grass-roots concerns of all interests in rural Ontario — farmers, small business people, educators and municipal politicians.

"Rural Ontario is affected by decisions at every ministry and at every level of the provincial government. Policy developed by the ministries of Education, Municipal Affairs, Health and the Solicitor General has far-ranging and significant impact. Residents told the task force of an increasing tendency of government to formulate 'Toronto-based' solutions to the problems of rural

areas. We have attempted to highlight these issues and to outline our commitments to deal with these problems effectively."

It's quite ironic when you read these words in this particular document and then you see what we've come to today. Which promise do you think matters more to the people of rural Ontario and northern Ontario: the Fewer Politicians Act or a greater voice in this Legislature? Incidentally, maybe they can answer that themselves in this very document:

"The message from rural Ontario has been quite simple — a succession of Liberal and NDP governments has failed to address their concerns. Agriculture and other vital components of the rural economy have been ignored. The present system of government is not functioning and needs to be fixed.

"We have heard your message and are prepared to do something about it."

This is the commonsense way of fixing government that doesn't function. This is the message that you've heard: "Elect me, and I'll do away with your riding"? I don't think so. I think what you heard is closer to what was quoted in the sidebar in this document, and it says here: "Many people told the commission that rural Ontario is angry and disappointed. They said they thought rural Ontario was left out of decision-making and was estranged from provincial government processes in Toronto." That's a quote from *New Planning for Ontario: The Final Report of the Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario*.

If you truly want to hear what it is rural and northern Ontario think of this issue, give them the chance to speak; to speak to more than just half a line in your campaign document. Let them speak to you, the government, now, and give all members of this assembly the same chance to speak to the legislation. Take the legislation to public hearings. After you've heard what the people have to say, give all members the necessary opportunity for a free vote in this Legislature. That, I think, is listening, and that is certainly grass roots.

The government also suggests that there will be major cost savings here. I'd be quite interested in knowing exactly what those amounts will be. I don't think there's actually any way of predicting what those amounts will be or the savings or the costs. I am certain the costs will be felt and understood soon enough in rural and northern Ontario. The feeling of frustration and alienation will be even greater as constituents travel even farther to see their MPP. Some communities will simply lose the member's office that may have been there for many, many years, drawing people to that particular community for the member's services and other spinoff economic activity that was associated with that visit to town.

I find it interesting that the government would suggest that we lead — and we heard it here again today — by example, that we start at the top. Certainly, in this particular place, starting at the top, if you are on the government side, you should be starting with government.

So I say to you, Mr Speaker, they say all of this — "We'll start from the top down" — and then they go on to talk about dropping MPPs and, more importantly, their ridings. Yet, in the same instance, they leave parliamen-

tary assistants in place and they leave caucus services in place. I would gamble to say that if you were able to explain those particular services, those particular areas, to the people of this province and measure them against the ability to have members in their ridings, I am sure they would pick members first.

I also want to say I think it's important that people understand some of the other expenditures of this place. One of them, which will probably not make me very popular in this place today, is the rebate you get during an election campaign. All members and all candidates will know that there's a certain rebate that is disseminated from the government and from the provincial coffers if you reach 15% of the electoral vote. I'll tell you, if you were to take that amount of money and put that against this cut we're making here as far as members go, there would be a substantial saving. I think the people of this province would prefer to have MPPs rather than to have their hard-earned tax dollars going back to the parties of this province.

1600

It's important that people understand in this place and out there in the province of Ontario how important it is to have representation. Representation is very hard to come by. In this place, it is very difficult for members of the opposition to be involved in government the way they would like to be and to be involved in the decision-making process the way they would like to be. I can tell you, having been in a number of different seats in this Legislature, that it is even much more difficult as an independent member of this Legislature to participate in any fundamental way.

I say to you in closing that I hope this government will keep in mind that in the view of most people in this province this should be public policy, not government policy. As the members before me have said, this is and should be about electoral reform, and that in itself should be considered public policy, not government policy.

I hope everyone has the opportunity to participate in this particular debate, and I hope everyone across this province has the opportunity to understand what the ramifications of this decision are, and that they will participate in any opportunity for public hearings and encourage their members in their particular ridings to push for a free vote on this legislation. It's vitally important that this House be perceived as a House for all Ontario. During the go-round with this particular document, the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development, you identified a perception that this was not a House for all of Ontario and you campaigned on it. You talked of grass roots; you talked of common sense. Taking someone's voice and their vote from them is neither of those.

I thank you for the time, Mr Speaker.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): The member has talked about his concern for rural Ontario. I share that, in the diminished voice that will come forward because of Bill 81, and I also have those same concerns for northern Ontario.

He spoke extensively from the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development. "Many people told the commission that rural Ontario is angry and disappointed.

they said they thought rural Ontario was left out of decision-making and was estranged from provincial government processes in Toronto." Bill 81 is not going to enhance the rural voice. Most clearly, it will not.

It's interesting to note that the people who were involved in this task force were Noble Villeneuve, Bill Murdoch, Al McLean, Leo Jordan, Chris Hodgson, Ernie Eves and Dianne Cunningham, and the Premier himself signed it. At the time, they had a concern for rural Ontario, no doubt, as they went door to door, kitchen to kitchen and hall to hall in all those communities. By introducing Bill 81, I believe the rural Ontario voice will be diminished, most clearly. I hope to speak on that further, but I concur with the member for Elgin in his opinion that rural Ontario is going to suffer because of the democratic withdrawal of its voice in the Parliament of Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Elgin on his remarks. I want to emphasize to members of the House that obviously we're elected to represent our constituents, but we are also elected to represent the best interests of the whole province. That means we have to weigh a bill like this very carefully in making a decision on how we should vote. For that reason, I think it's rather intriguing that the member, as an independent member, would suggest there should be a free vote on a bill like this. I must say, I have some sympathy with that point of view. I would hope that such a vote would free up members opposite who represent rural constituencies, such as my friend the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who in the past has been quite vociferous in this House in saying that not only should we not cut back on the number of rural ridings, we should actually either maintain the status quo or increase the number of rural ridings.

I'm not sure that would be fair in terms of rep by pop. Rep by pop is a very important issue we have to deal with, but we also have to take into account geography. To argue that somehow, by taking into account geography, we are diminishing the value of a vote in urban Ontario I think is to indicate that a member from urban Ontario who voices that opinion is not properly taking into account his responsibility to make decisions on the basis of what is good for the whole of the province, not just for his urban constituents. I also argue, though, that it is the responsibility of members representing rural constituencies to consider rep by pop, but there has to be a balance. It cannot be just one or the other.

Mr Gilchrist: I'd just like to make a brief comment in response to the address by the member for Elgin. Unfortunately the math does not hold true when we're talking about the change in the percentage of seats in this House. While there is no doubt, obviously, that when you reduce from 130 to 103 members there will be a reduction in the absolute number of seats in every part of the province, the fact of that matter is that the biggest loser is Metro Toronto. We have 1.7% fewer seats, as a percentage of the seats in this Legislature, after the redistribution than before.

Across the rest of Ontario no other region comes close to that. In most regions of Ontario, depending on exactly how finely you want to define a region, the change is so

close that the addition of one seat either way makes it a plus or minus. In some areas it's up 0.2% of the seats here, in others it's down 0.4%, and I'm sure that no member is going to indulge time of this House debating on one seat one way or the other.

But the bottom line is that the biggest reduction, as a percentage of the seats that are in this chamber, is Metro Toronto. If anyone could be making a case of greater workload, of greater ability to get around and represent their constituents and meet their constituents, it would be the members from Metro Toronto. The area with the greatest growth is the GTA.

Mr Wildman: Would they go up?

Mr Gilchrist: They should go up. Right now there are ridings with 150,000 people, and yet in the north we have ridings with only 19,000 voters and about 26,000 people. Clearly, with inequities like that, there has to be a restoration of some semblance of balance. There will be a period of adjustment, no doubt, but as we said in response to the last comments, there still is an 18% allowance, a differential that's built in there for the member from northern Ontario.

Mr Conway: The member for Scarborough East makes a very compelling argument for the government case, and I want to congratulate him for that. But he also reminds me — you know, the senior Senator from Georgia, Sam Nunn, is retiring — he was saying the other day about the Gingrich crowd that came to Congress a couple of years ago, "You know, them young Turks, while they're often wrong, they're never in doubt." I think there's a little bit of wisdom in that.

I think, to be fair to the member from Scarborough, he and the member for Elgin used a very important word: "balance." The member from Scarborough is absolutely right when he points out that in recent years it's taken, I think, something like seven times the number of people in Markham to elect a member to this Legislature as it does in the electoral district of Rainy River. That is out of balance and unfair and it ought to be dealt with, and I hope there is an agreement on all sides that we want to deal with that.

But this proposal, Bill 81, gives us an electoral district, for example — I don't know what it's called but it's a revised Algoma-Manitoulin — that will reach, in the south from Killarney to the north at Manitouwadge, 450 miles. There is simply no way to imagine effective representation in a region like that. I say to my friend from Scarborough and anybody else that there must be a balance between population and geography. There isn't a federation in the developed world that doesn't take this into account.

Need I state the obvious? In the great American republic, yes, there is a rep by pop lower House, but Idaho and California each have two senators in the enormously powerful decision-making upper House of that federation, or of that structure — I shouldn't call it exactly a federation. It's a clear recognition. That's the US Senate. So balance between rep by pop and geography, please.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Elgin, you have two minutes.

Mr North: First of all I want to thank all the members who spoke just a few minutes ago: the member for Essex-Kent who spoke again, as he always does eloquently, of rural Ontario and puts forward a strong voice for the Liberal caucus for rural Ontario; the member for Algoma who, in this new setup, probably will go into his riding never to be seen again, with a riding that size; the member from Scarborough East, who talked about Metro, the Toronto area, as the biggest loser.

I think people from rural Ontario and northern Ontario and probably a few members of your own caucus, like the fine gentleman who sits in front there, the Minister of Agriculture, would have a difficult time ever believing that Toronto has been the biggest loser in any circumstance. I think they've done fairly well over the years, and the representation has always been fairly good in this particular Legislature for those people.

The member for Renfrew North brought up a number of very important points starting this debate a few days ago and continues to bring up and reconcur with his points with regard to how the electoral process in this particular province works and perhaps does not work.

I feel very strongly about this. I think this is very much a public policy and I feel very strongly that it's the people of the province who should decide this. In some ways it's intriguing, or perhaps ironic, that on one side of this discussion we're talking about diminishing the numbers of members, but more important, diminishing the number of constituencies, and on the other side we're talking about referenda. As was said earlier, it would be interesting to see this come to a referendum, because in their hearts I think the people of this province feel very strongly that when they want to speak to their MPPs, they want them to be there to represent them.

Mr Gravelle: I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak on Bill 81, which, as you know, has quite a formal title but is commonly being called, by the Premier and the government side, the Fewer Politicians Act. The truth is that it should really be called the Make the Northern and Rural Ridings Disappear Act, because that's exactly what it's all about. The 27 fewer seats that will result at the end of this are ridings that represent rural and northern areas almost completely.

The example I want to use, and there are so many, is the one of Lake Nipigon. It's an example of a riding that has communities such as Nipigon, Red Rock, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Marathon, Geraldton, Longlac and Beardmore. They're now being told they no longer deserve their own riding. They will now be melded into the Port Arthur riding, which I represent.

Certainly whoever represents this large new riding will have his or her hands very full, but the Premier should understand one thing: He can reduce our ridings but he will never reduce our fury at a government that has systematically gone about the process of abandoning the north. This bit of legislation is but another attack on those of us who represent the north. By reducing the number of seats in northern Ontario from 15 to 10 the Premier may think he will quiet the opposition to the thoughtless decisions he's making that are hurting us so grievously in the north, but he is sadly mistaken. We know what is best for us in the north and we know what

will work for us. Despite his attempts through this bill to quiet us, he will not be successful.

Of course, it would help if we had a Minister of Northern Development who actually represented the interests of the north.

Mr Wildman: Who's he?

Mr Gravelle: Mr Phantom. We have learned that his job is not to protect the interests of northerners but simply to help implement the crushing decisions of his boss. There are so many examples I can give in terms of what this minister himself has not done for the north. I want to give a few examples, if I may, Mr Speaker.

Let's begin with health restructuring. The restructuring commission has bulldozed across the north, hit Thunder Bay and Sudbury. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has not spoken one word about it. He has in no way represented the interests of the north. We have had hundreds of people writing him about this, asking for his response. In fact, a former northern development officer in Thunder Bay, Mr Bev Young, has written him with a very well-thought-out letter and asked for responses and this has not happened. So certainly we have not been very pleased by that.

But the list goes on and on. If you look at the Ministry of Natural Resources, a layoff of 2,100 people in northern Ontario; a 45% cut to the ministry staffing coming from northern Ontario. The Minister of Northern Development has not spoken up, has not done anything to defend the north. Closure of provincial parks, 11 provincial parks in northern Ontario; closure of the environmental lab in Thunder Bay — and we've learned since this lab was closed that it's now going to cost two, three, four or five times as much for the private labs to do the business. It's going to cost more.

The minister has not spoken up on this. The minister will not protect the north. He's just got a job to do and he's a yes man for it. Closure of fire bases in northern Ontario: We saw very recently this past spring when the fires broke out in northern Ontario, that indeed there was no effort made to hire the thousands of northerners, especially in northwestern Ontario, who simply could have done the job. Instead, millions of dollars were spent to bring in firefighters from other provinces and from the United States when indeed northerners could be used. The minister is simply not there representing us. So much for the document *A Voice for the North*.

What is quite ironic too is the position taken by this government on the issue of redistribution when they were in opposition. We have some quotes here that have a very peculiar and familiar ring, and it's really quite fascinating. I really do want to read some of them. I won't read them in great detail, but I did in my earlier response and I think it's significant who the members were who were speaking.

Number one quote: "Rural and northern Ontario must have more, not less, representation" — our present Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Those were the comments from him in 1987.

"There is the question of travel...I don't think the workload is being properly recognized by this process" — the member for Leeds-Grenville in 1987 in Hansard.

"Other interests, like community commonality, have been ignored" — the Premier of the province, the member for Nipissing, extraordinary, back in 1987.

And this quote, which I think is really quite extraordinary — and I don't think I would feel this way, but certainly I look forward to representing my riding as vigorously as ever, regardless of the size. This quote is: "It goes without saying that travel time in large rural ridings would render effective representation by one MPP very difficult, if not virtually impossible" — the member for Parry Sound in 1987; extraordinary comments, to say the least.

Mr Wildman: He was speaking the truth then.

Mr Gravelle: Well, if you think he was speaking the truth, that's very interesting as well. We know we can handle the job. This government continues to want to just simply quiet our voices and it certainly isn't going to happen.

On the issue itself of the decision to meld the provincial ridings with the federal boundaries, I think it's important to point out that there certainly is a difference in terms of the workload. I must say while I preface this, I formerly have worked for a federal member of Parliament and I began my career in fact many years ago in doing that and have very recently done so and I have great respect for the amount of work they do, and I in fact know the level of work they do.

But there is very little question, in terms of the day-to-day activities of what goes on in terms of the constituency offices, that the load on the provincial level is pretty extreme and pretty extraordinary, especially when we have to respond to what this government is doing.

But I would like to take this opportunity to at least read a paragraph from an editorial from the October 3 edition of my home-town paper, the *Chronicle Journal-Times*, because I think it raises some important points. It also speaks to some of the other quotes that have come from various editorials that the government side has read.

The heading in the *Chronicle* says, "Nine MPPs Not Enough," and that is exactly the number that will end up in northern Ontario. The quote says: "But how many contacts do Ontarians have with their federal government in comparison with the province? Ontario governs our health and education, our working conditions, our justice and security, our resources, our municipalities, environment and human rights. These and many other functions bring us into regular communication with provincial offices, whereas citizen calls to federal departments are exceptional. Without their MPPs, many citizens would be at a loss to deal with provincial bureaucracy."

These considerations have obviously been ignored by the Premier. In his zeal to cater to what he thinks is a popular thing, he's denying northerners a genuine vehicle for being heard and, more importantly, for being helped. We do not have the same access to service that people do in southern Ontario, and we will continue to fight to have those services improved in northern Ontario.

1620

This government is quick to point to their *A Voice for the North* policy paper as their commitment to the north. I've certainly read this paper. I know this document fairly well. This document promises a greater say to north-

erners. This document promised no more made-in-Toronto solutions to northern Ontario challenges. Clearly, these promises have been broken time and time again. This bill is only one more example of this government's abandonment of the north. What's become clear to everybody in the north is that this government is no friend to the north. We in the opposition will continue to fight and fight hard for the interests of all northerners because this government will not do it for them.

Despite the vast distances between communities in our ridings, we serve our constituents to the best of our abilities and we serve them honourably and we serve them effectively, and with the greatest integrity all the time. With this bill and with even greater distances between our communities and constituents, we're going to be impeded in our efforts to serve the best interests of our constituents, but we will do it, we will continue to fight on behalf of our constituents. Nothing less than that will be good enough for those of us who truly care and those of us in the north who will not stop the fight.

Let me conclude, if I may, with one paragraph, the final paragraph from the editorial in the Chronicle-Journal that I read from earlier: "Maybe someone should strap the Premier to one of those 27 chairs and have the truck drive from one end of the monstrous new Kenora-Rainy River riding to the other to allow him to understand the enormity of his proposal. Northern Ontario needs at least the 15 seats that it has now; nine isn't enough by any means."

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I'm about to pay a compliment to my friend and distinguished colleague the member for Port Arthur. I know him quite well in attending to the very needs, in listening well to the needs and aspirations and hopes of the citizens he represents. I know he isn't too eager when he looks at the land mass, when he contemplates what is ahead in terms of Lake Nipigon. He mentioned at the very beginning that if he were to leave just west of Manitouwadge and embark on a journey to serve the people of the new riding, he would drive 600, not kilometres but miles, to reach Pickle Lake, and then the road system in the province of Ontario comes to an end. To serve the remainder of the riding to Hudson Bay, add to it an additional 400 miles. That is a total of 1,000 miles, and the government is saying that it's not enough; when you have New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia put together and multiplied by two, they wish to make it larger.

The member for Renfrew has so rightly pointed out on several occasions that you have to strike a balance, that equilibrium, compromise, rep by pop — population — should be important factors. Also, you have to guarantee that people will get representation by virtue of a larger than ordinary territory.

An irony: the member for Elgin, who spoke previously, won the last election, obviously. The people who came second and third, the candidates, each got, by virtue of getting more than 15% of the vote, a kickback from the government. The member opposite is the only member who did not get a rebate from the provincial government even though he won the election. It doesn't make much sense.

Mr Conway: It's good to have some of the northern members speak to this. I was saying to the member for Algoma that there are two kinds of northern constituencies, as well. You've got the riding like the city of Sault Ste Marie. That's not a bad circumstance. That's, I think, an entirely urban riding that happens to be located in northern Ontario. Then of course you get a geographic wonder like Algoma-Manitoulin under the expanded plan and, let me tell you, you've got something else.

I find it interesting, by the way, that the sponsor of this bill is the member for East York. I don't live in Metropolitan Toronto, but I look at the map and I think, what is this thing called East York? Surely, if a rep by pop imperative were applied to Metropolitan Toronto, we wouldn't be troubled with a Leaside or East York. Come on. My friend Judge Guzzo's here from Ottawa. You look at the map of Ottawa-Carleton and you see this little municipality called the village of Rockcliffe Park. Now, where did that come from?

Mr Baird: Get rid of it.

Mr Conway: The member for Nepean says, with a west-end flick of the wrist, "Get rid of it." Aha. Well, my point is that we've got areas like East York and Rockcliffe Park because we have organized ourselves in this democratic community that we call Ontario over the decades, recognizing — the village of Point Edward; another one that perhaps comes to mind. There is not always and everywhere a slavish, singleminded devotion to rep by pop. There must be a regard for rep by pop, obviously. But let me tell you that the geographical reality of Ontario and Canada must be observed, and this policy does not do it, in my view, to a reasonable extent.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Port Arthur, two minutes.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly would like to thank my colleagues from Lake Nipigon and Renfrew North for responding so sensitively to the issue. I know the description certainly of the riding is more than impressive when you think of the distance one must travel. It should not be thought of as being a sense that we are not in any sense capable or prepared to deal with the riding. It's more a sense of the fact that this government obviously is just simply trying to ignore the reality of what it's doing to the constituents we represent.

I said earlier as well that we will make every effort, as we always have, to communicate with our constituents, but when you're asking a constituent, and many times, to go hundreds of kilometres — you can meet in the middle of your riding, each of you travelling hundreds of kilometres to meet in the middle of your riding. That simply isn't fair. I know the member for Lake Nipigon has had a large riding for many years now and certainly has done his best. This new riding will obviously be much more expansive.

In terms of the member for Renfrew North, it's always a pleasure for me to listen to him speak in the Legislature, and with him leading off the debate on behalf of our caucus, it was really a remarkable lesson for all of us in terms of the issue in a broader sense. I know that all members of the House could not help but listen to him, and I certainly appreciate the comments that he made now.

I only hope that the members on the other side of the House, those who are being forced to support this bill and those who do not want to support this bill, will also feel free to get up and speak their minds, because their constituents deserve that and their constituents really are expecting those of you who are also in that position to represent their interests. I only hope that you can get rid of the shackles of this government and speak on behalf of your constituents, as we will always do on this side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Marchese: I too am very pleased to be here today to speak against Bill 81 and I will be making a number of arguments against it, as some other previous —

Mr Conway: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I get concerned when I see honourable members of the Legislature having to leave the chamber to go and get coats, perhaps even winter coats, to come back here and do business. So in response to perhaps a chill in the air, you might —

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps you could have some heated debate.

Mr Marchese: Wanting to get into the debate and speaking very much against Bill 81, I want to begin by making reference to some of the comments the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has made, because he, like so many others, speaks with such galloping glee as they make reductions in a number of areas, and in particular as they make reductions in the number of members of the House. They seem to take pleasure in the fact that they're leading in this particular debate, and as they do this they don't examine the kind of implications reductions will have, but rather seem to be very happy that by and large they will be saving a great deal of money, and isn't that leadership by the government.

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They always speak, when they speak about these things, in the abstract. As they've done on so many other occasions, I notice when they talk about the kinds of reductions they have made to seniors' benefits, now that they have to pay the dispensing fee, a number of parliamentarians on the other side talk about how "It's only a 2% reduction we're making; it's really not all that serious." They speak about percentages in the abstract, rather than how that affects concretely those poor individuals who are affected by that change of system where they're now forced to pay some money, which in my view is a great deal of money for those who have very little in the first place — for the many who have very little in the first place. As usual, they abstract the issues and they never concretize them in terms of the effects that these kinds of policies have on people, in this particular case on the members and quite directly on the constituencies we serve.

The member for Hastings speaks with such great ignorance about how this will affect the north in particular. The northern members have pointed out the kind of reality they face up there versus the reality we face down here, and I have a great deal of sympathy with what they describe. When a number of them say that their ridings are bigger and will be bigger than some other countries in the world, I am breathless when they talk about that,

because I wouldn't want to have to travel such distances to represent my constituency.

In listening to them, as we should, I am able to understand that I'm not quite sure how adequately I would be able to represent those northern constituencies, but for the Tories it seems quite simple: You just do it. "If you don't want to do it," the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says, "we'll find a few nice Tories to run up there." I'm sure he would. I'm sure they would find a few Tories to run up there —

Mr Wildman: Oh, yes, but they have to get elected.

Mr Marchese: Of course — but does that do justice to the constituencies that these members have to serve up there? Obviously not.

If you're a reasonable-minded constituent out there listening to this debate, you will understand, based on the kind of discussion we've had and the kind of comments people have made already, that it will be very, very difficult to be able to adequately represent those constituencies up there. Indeed, we have to listen to each other and we have to listen to what the members have to say.

Part of the problem, and I will touch on this later, is how we get to make the decisions that we have made, because what this government has done is to change the process around how we redistribute seats and, in this particular case, eliminate seats. As I said, I will get back to that later.

Again, they're happy to talk about the fact that they've scrapped these gold-plated pensions and that they're about to reduce 27 more seats, and "Aren't we wonderful members of the House? You've elected, finally, a government that's been listening to you."

What they are not understanding, in my view and in the view of a few others who have already spoken, is that they're diminishing their own role. They diminish themselves and all of us in this House when they speak that way, because it gives everyone the appearance that we don't even value what we do, that we don't value the work we do, when they can simply say, "We're leading by example by eliminating 27 seats." When they can simply say that without understanding the implications it has to people up there, I'm not sure they're leading. I'm not sure they quite understand the effects of the policies that they're introducing.

I am quite concerned about the way they make decisions, under the guise of being democratic and responding to what people are saying out there. My view, and the view of many, of course, is that they're pandering to what a few people think about politicians, and that's how we diminish our role once again, because if it is true that people believe that we are not worth very much as politicians, then getting rid of 27 politicians is not a big deal.

But why would you, as politicians, knowing the work that you do, pander to such a view, pander to such a feeling that's out there? Because if you believe that is true and that you're responding to the people who believe that, then you have no value and no worth of yourself as a politician, and I'm worried about your role and our role in terms of what we were elected to do.

I want to get to some of the issues in terms of what the Chair of Management Board has said, because I went

over his remarks and I hear it echoed in a number of speeches that are made by the Conservative members. By and large, they are read, which gives me the impression that someone prepared them and they are parroting the words of whoever has prepared them. I find that troublesome. It's not unusual. Every government has done it. We've been there. We've been there enough to know that the speeches, by and large, sound the same, because once cabinet or the Premier's office has made a decision, then it just trickles down. It is certainly true that the trickle-down theory works there very effectively and the members reflect the hierarchy of that decision-making very clearly, because as you hear members — I'm listening to them very carefully — they say the same things. It's marvellous.

What are the things they're saying? "Commitment" is the first word uttered by many of the members opposite, and it was the first word that Mr Johnson, the Chair of Management Board, raised. He said: "We made that commitment a long time ago, before the election, and we're keeping it. Aren't we great politicians that we can keep a promise that we made?"

Maybe that's a good thing. Having said what you said, that you would do it — and it has been done through this bill — maybe it's good that you're doing it. I don't happen to believe that it is a good process you've engaged in. I don't happen to believe that because you included that in your revolution everybody knew about that particular bill you would now be introducing. I don't happen to believe that by including it in the document everybody has agreed with what you are now proposing. I will speak to that later, but it isn't a process that is correct, that has given people the voice to then tell you, "Please introduce Bill 81." On the basis of commitment, yes, you kept your promise.

Mr Johnson then goes on to say that it's more understandable. I'm prepared to say that if the boundaries are similar, both provincial and federal, it makes it understandable. It is easier for those who follow boundaries to know, "Oh, these are the boundaries and they're both the same, provincial and federal." Yes, in that particular regard it makes it more understandable. Okay. What have we achieved once we have done that? Once we have made the boundaries the same and some people have a better understanding of the boundaries, then what? What have you done, and what democracy or empowerment have you given the people of Ontario through that process? I don't think very much. Is that a good justification for it? I don't believe so.

He then goes on to talk about a higher level of accountability in government. I'm not quite certain how we achieve that through this measure. How do we achieve a higher level of accountability by reducing this House by 27 seats? I haven't heard any logic that would sustain that argument. No other member seems to speak about how this makes the process or politicians or this Legislature or the cabinet more accountable. It leads me to believe that you're only saying this and the words are empty, because there is no substance to the argument. If there is and if some of you can make the argument, I would like to hear it. But it certainly does not make this whole process any more accountable than it has ever been.

People use these words, and perhaps there is resonance with some people in the public when you say them, but unless you explain them and define them with some intelligence, people won't believe it eventually, because they'll see through it.

The Chair of Management Board continues and talks about leadership, and I've already touched that. They're leading, they're asking the civil service to do more with less, he says, and there are generally greater cost reductions they talk about. They're very proud of these cost-reduction measures they have taken, they're proud of the health cuts they have made, over \$1.3 billion, they're proud of the education cuts they have made and they're very proud to be able to give more income tax money back to the very wealthy. They're quite proud — in fact, they drool at the thought — of privatizing more and more services so that those who own a great concentration of wealth will continue to own a greater concentration of wealth.

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All of these policies were supposed to, of course, create a better and healthier economy. As we noted, and as our leader noted today, the unemployment rate is higher. But all of the policies of this government — cutting workers in great numbers, giving people an income tax cut, cutting health care benefits, social services and education — were supposed to create a better and healthier economy, and yet it's failing them, it's failing us. This system they speak about, which was supposed to serve the people of Ontario, is failing us because clearly the unemployment numbers are higher than they were before. Yet their policies were supposed to make it better. The cuts they speak about, doing more with less, are quite clearly a social, cultural and economic disaster. We're witnessing it. The people who are affected most by it are feeling it more than those of us who still have a job.

Let me go on to what Mr Johnson was saying about how the cutting of members is going to make this whole process better. He talks about making it more efficient and more effective. He didn't explain how it does that, nor have I heard any other member across talk about how it makes us more efficient. They say, generally, in an abstract way: "We've done it before; we could do it again. We could run this place like a more efficient business, and that's how government should run. We could do it, surely, with less." If you just say it in the abstract in this way, it appears to make sense. But if you study it thoroughly and unpackage the whole thing, you have to ask them, how is it making it more efficient? I can tell you, it does not. Taking 27 members out of this Legislature and having the rest of us represent a greater constituency does not make it more effective and certainly does not make it more efficient.

A number of members have talked about the fact that our constituents and our constituency workers are, on a regular basis, quite busy dealing with a lot of things that this Legislature is responsible for in education, workers' compensation, employment-standards-related issues, environment-related issues and social-assistance-related issues. These matters, and so many others, keep our offices very busy. Does adding to that load make us more

efficient? I'm not sure it does; in fact, I'm quite certain it does not. But these are the words the Chair of Management Board uses in making his argument and justification for the elimination of those 27 people. I think they are wrong. I think they are inaccurate. I think that it does not tell people the truth about what really is going to happen when they cut these people from this Legislature.

Yes, to a great extent, as he says, it does respond to some of the grass-roots people — that's the word he uses. Yes, it responds to some of what those people have said. But I don't think it tells the whole story. There's more to this than what they pretend to talk about.

Mr Johnson then adds, "Will adding more politicians address this problem that I'm speaking of?" No one in this House spoke about having more politicians. I know that the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale earlier on talked about the fact that some members here have advocated that, but I haven't heard anybody on the Liberal benches talk about having greater numbers of politicians. It's an unfair question to be asking, because nobody has been saying that we should be adding more politicians through the issue of redistribution. So why does he talk about it, except to let people believe that's what some of the people in opposition are saying? But certainly no one in the NDP has said that. I'm not quite certain about the Liberals, but I haven't heard any one of them talk about that either.

How does this elimination of politicians make the political process more democratic and accountable? It doesn't. It doesn't do it whatsoever. The reduction doesn't do it, and I can tell you that the constituents will not benefit from it.

I can also tell you that the referendum matter that will come before us in terms of further debate down the line is not going to solve that particular issue either. I'm not sure that our history around referenda is a particularly useful one. We don't have much of a history. Other countries probably have created a long history in referendums, where people may have acquired a better sense of how people get involved in the democratic process, but our experience by and large is very limited and it does not probe the issues in depth very well. So what you have is an instinctive reaction to issues, which is not a reflective one. I'm not quite sure that's what we want. I am not at all sure this leads to a more democratic process in the House; in fact I'm quite certain it doesn't.

What it does is to shift power away from this Legislature — from you, members of the Conservative back benches — and transfer greater power to the Office of the Premier. The Office of the Premier, as you all know, already has that power. He will continue to have that power; all I'm arguing is that you will have less with fewer members, not necessarily more.

I'm be interested to have a few members talk about how democratic your process is in your caucus. I would be interested to know the kind of voice you members of the back bench have. I'd be interested to know whether your voices are heard, whether cabinet listens to you or whether decisions from the cabinet and from the Premier's office come right down and you simply mimic them. You have to be out of power to realize that you should have grabbed some of the power that you as members

have. The problem is that while you are in power, you don't realize you have it and you don't want to exercise it because you're afraid. I understand that; we've been there. I know you won't speak to this because we all have shared it and we all have to come to the opposition benches here to realize how we exercise a little of the power we've got. What you're doing is giving it away. You members are giving some of that power away by parroting what the Premier has told you you should do, and that is, the Premier says, "This is good," and the rest of you say, "This is great. We're leading by example."

Le pauvre M. Villeneuve, who in opposition had a great deal to say about this, now of course is silenced by this.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): That was then.

Mr Marchese: Exactly: that was then. He was in opposition then and he had a great deal to say about this. Mr Conway mentioned this. This is what he said: "As many of the previous speakers addressing this" redistribution question "have mentioned, we do not want to see the rural part of Ontario further underrepresented. I," M. Villeneuve, "personally feel, because of the location of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and the structure and makeup of rural areas, we must retain the status quo intact. It is a situation that was addressed by a number of my colleagues and I certainly agree with them," says M. Villeneuve.

How dreadful the poor man must feel to have said this in opposition with sincerity and conviction of beliefs, and now of course he's silenced completely, not because he's in cabinet but because the Premier decided that he was going to take the decision, and those members — Mr Runciman, Ernie Eves — who are quite close to the Premier all had a great deal to say about this; all ministers, including Ms Marland. A number of you have commented about this in the past, but of course I don't hear any of the people I mentioned respond to the effects this bill has on those convictions and beliefs that you held when you were in opposition.

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Mr Christopherson: They're muzzled.

Mr Marchese: I can only conclude that they have been muzzled. Why else would they not speak in defence of those beliefs they once held? Certainly if those beliefs were held then, they would be convictions that they hold now.

So what happens in that transition? How do we transfer away our convictions to the Premier's office? How do we do that so easily? Something happens, and it's a loss of power. You give it away. All of you in the back benches are giving that power away, because I believe that many of you don't believe in what is being done here. I really believe that. But I know there's caucus solidarity out there. We certainly had it; you have it as well. To deny that is to tell a lie. You're holding on to the solidarity of this bill. The Premier said, "We're doing it, boys and women," and you're all doing it and you fall into line. But you're hurting yourselves, you're hurting us and you're hurting the entire political process as you do that.

I would be quite interested in hearing from the democracy of the back benches as it relates to your own processes within caucus to explain to me that it's quite different over there, that you have your own views, of course, and that you're not attached to any particular bill that comes from the autocracy of the Premier's office. I very much want to hear from you, particularly from the members I mentioned who had a lot to say in opposition.

Will you have more power? Will constituencies have more power when you eliminate more politicians? They will not. Or are the considerations purely the elimination of politicians just to save a few dollars as you pander to those who relish the thought of the reductions? Is that what this is all about? If we reduce it to simply a matter of saving a few dollars, that is for me the most stupid politics I have ever seen. If the argument is that we save a few bucks and we're leading by doing so, I find that reductionism of argument the most simple and crude and stupid that I have ever seen in the House.

You've got to come up, in my view, with better arguments to make it more sensible to those who you want to believe in what you're doing. The arguments I've heard so far from some of the members, and particularly the Chair of Management Board, haven't convinced me whatsoever. They didn't sound intelligent to me, and I'm quite convinced they don't sound very intelligent to the people out there.

I tell you this: Northerners will be very unhappy, rural members will be angry, not just unhappy, and a lot of other people in other areas, including Metro, which loses eight seats, will be very, very unhappy, not to mention other areas, once people understand where seats are being eliminated. They will raise the question, "Will I be properly represented?" That's the question that needs to be asked, not the question of, "We're making it clear because we've combined federal and provincial ridings." That doesn't make it clear; that doesn't solve it. That doesn't give people, the electorate, any more power or empowerment whatsoever. It doesn't do that. It takes power away from us all when we do this.

That's why I'm asking the members in the back benches — and I don't use that disparagingly, because we were there — to reflect on what they're doing. You see, they will be here. It's a question of time. If it's not the next election, it'll happen, as it happens to us all. When it comes around, we will all learn from it. It's incredible, the magic that overtakes you once you're in opposition, because you realize how different it can be. The arrogance of power and the arrogance of having a seat on the other side isn't something you should dismiss. You should reflect on it, because we tend to reflect on that arrogance only once we're out of power, not while we are in power. So I urge the members to think of that.

Mr Wildman: I was never arrogant.

Mr Marchese: I heard a friend of mine here, my colleague, who said he was never arrogant. He's right. There are a few who are not. The member for Algoma was one of them. But there are many who are affected by power, and we are affected, or infected, as a government by power, and we tend to do, sometimes, very strange things in the name of keeping our commitment.

This process is a very undemocratic process. Since the mid-1950s we've used a procedure for the provinces to look at and establish a procedure for redistribution of riding boundaries. I thought it was a very useful procedure to have engaged in. In 1962, 1973 and 1983 this was done by the appointment of an independent commission through an order in council. Prior to the commission appointments the terms of reference and guidelines and procedures to be followed by the boundaries commission were established by resolution of the Legislature. I believe that was a very good process because it distanced, to the extent possible, the cabinet and the Premier from this decision. It permitted a group of people, dispassionate, hopefully, and distant from the political arm, to make decisions about how we should redistribute offices. It was an important way to have dealt with this issue.

What the Premier has done in this case was to say: "Let us dispense with that democratic process. We don't need it. I will make the decisions because I got elected. It was in the Common Sense Revolution, and they, the people, have agreed with me. Therefore I am enacting and introducing a bill that says exactly that." So the Premier says, "Dispense with the traditional process," which we have established since 1962, to re-establish a new political process set up by the all-powerful Premier who says, "This is what we're going to do: We're going to lead by example." So he dispenses with a democratic process of consultation and introduces a bill here in the House that, by decree, says, "This is how it's going to be."

Is this the way the people of Ontario wanted to be governed? Is that the way their voices are being heard? I don't believe so whatsoever. I believe the people of Ontario want to be heard on this particular issue. I really believe this government, if it believes what it says about consulting, as it often says it does — what we need are hearings, and we need hearings across Ontario; not just in little isolated Toronto so the rest of the folks can come down here and comment about how this affects the north and rural or eastern or western Ontario, not little Toronto, but they should go everywhere. If you really believe in what you're doing, you should have nothing to be afraid of by taking this bill out to the rest of the province. My view is that they not only want to be heard but need to be heard. If the Premier fails in doing that, the members should question why, because there's genuine fear about what he's doing, and that he really, truly doesn't believe in what he's doing if he doesn't have hearings across Ontario.

Mr Baird: I hope the member opposite would recognize that there could be an honest disagreement of opinion with respect to this bill. One of the members earlier spoke about breaking free of the shackles, and I just can't think of something that would be more insulting. To suggest that our constituents on this side of the House would not support this bill, that we would only get up and vote for this bill because we were told to, is absolutely insulting. I can assure you that when I get up and vote in favour of Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act, I'll be doing so representing the people I was sent here to represent.

I was at a tenants' meeting in my riding the other day, in the community of Bayshore, and one of the questions was: "When are politicians going to finally make their share of the contribution? They've cut everyone else. When are you going to see some reductions?" I was pleased to be able to report that we're indeed going to lead by example and are going to take a commensurate reduction, as has the public service, as have a whole host of others in the public sector.

1700

The members opposite in both parties — the official opposition and the third party — promised to balance the budget, yet every single time this government brings forward a proposal to reduce spending they oppose it. This proposal will save \$11 million. In my riding \$11 million is a lot of money, and the people of Ontario want to see reductions.

When we stopped subsidizing the parliamentary restaurant they were against it. When we stopped subsidizing, last week, baton twirling — baton twirling — they were against it. Now we're proposing to reduce the number of politicians, go down to the federal level of 103, something that was not written by this government, was not written by this cabinet, something that was done by an independent body at the federal level, a completely different level, something that was done before we were even elected. To say somehow that's politically motivated is ridiculous.

It's about leadership by example. I'll be able to go back to my riding and say: "We did what we said we would do. We led by example, and the leadership started right at the executive level, at the legislative level of government."

Mr Wildman: I want to commend my friend from Fort York for his comments and his position on this legislation. In response to him, the member for Nepean got up and said he is proud to support this legislation because his constituents support it. I respect him for saying that.

My only comment is, though, that if that is his position, perhaps the member for S-D-G & East Grenville will be able to get up in this House and explain his position on this piece of legislation in relation to what he said in 1992 and what he said in 1986; or the member for Parry Sound will get up in this House and defend this legislation in relation to what he said in 1992 and 1986; or the member for Leeds-Grenville and all the other members over there who defended rural Ontario when there was a possibility that representation would be cut in rural Ontario, and now, because they're on the other side of the aisle, are ready to abandon their constituents, ready to abandon support for rural Ontario. Talk about situation ethics.

It's about time we heard the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs explain why, in 1992, he had a resolution before this House which said not only should we not cut rural ridings, we should maintain the status quo, or, he said, increase the number of rural ridings. Why is it, now that he is on the treasury bench, when he has some opportunity to affect what happens in this province, he's changed his position? Just explain why that is. Why shouldn't the people of rural Ontario have

the same kind of support from the members of the Conservative Party in 1996 that they had in 1992 and 1986?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to rise and respond to my good friend from Fort York. In response to his question, specifically, "How does it make sense if our effort is to be more efficient?" I wouldn't expect a third-party backbencher, a member of a government that overspent all its revenue in every exaggerated term you could imagine, to understand that this government means to meet the bottom line on behalf of the people of Ontario.

In response to Mr Wildman's comment, I am a member from a mainly rural riding and I'm pleased to stand in support of the bill we're discussing today, Bill 81.

If you've been following the press recently, even the Toronto Star of October 7 is quoted very much in support, I might reiterate, that this government is not only doing what it promised; it's doing what had to be done.

I also think the people should respond to the member for Renfrew North. I listened with great interest to his remarks last week and thought he made a number of good comments, but he also clearly recognized — I'm looking at the copy of Hansard — that this government committed during the election, as everyone on the opposite side of the House knows full well, to reduce the size of government. Just as we promised to reduce the gold-plated pension, we are planning to deliver on our promises. If you want to know what we're about to do, you should read the Common Sense Revolution, because that's the plan the people of Ontario voted for, for us to carry out.

I'm going to look at the Hansard and learn from this. We are restructuring the way people of Ontario are sick and tired of being overgoverned. I can speak for my riding, that we're in support of Bill 81.

Mr Christopherson: I want to rise and compliment my colleague the member for Fort York on his excellent speech. He holds the government, particularly the backbenchers, to task for the position they're taking. They do not seem to have thought this through. They do not seem to be speaking in the best interests of their own members. They're following along blindly, as they've done on every single issue so far, the interests of what the Premier wants, and the Premier's assistants. That's the only thing they care about.

One of the things the member for Fort York talked about was an open process. This government said, "We will be an open government. We'll be a transparent government. We will give people an opportunity to be heard," and on every issue that matters they have shut down the public process. This is no different. To somehow suggest that public hearings held at the federal level regarding the number of federal seats automatically equates to having provincial public hearings about provincial seats is to then say that we can also apply the formula of provincial MPPs to the number of aldermen or local councillors we ought to have. There is a difference in the community of interest.

That's why the federal government is entitled to deal with its own government formation, the formation of the House of Commons, and the province with its own.

There's a different community of interest. The fact of the matter is that you cannot break the province down into the same community of interest that you can the federal government. Our own leader has said that it may indeed be time, as it is over a cyclical basis, for a change in the boundaries and to look at things. Fair enough. But to deny the people of Ontario an opportunity to have a say on their direct representation is to deny them a democracy. I agree with the member for Fort York that this is what you're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Fort York has two minutes to respond.

Mr Marchese: I thank the members from Nepean, Algoma, Durham East and Hamilton Centre for their comments. With respect to the member for Nepean and the comments he makes about honest disagreement, yes, there often is honest disagreement, and I agree with that. It's quite often clear and ideological, and I understand that. My point on this one is that I'm not sure some of you or many of you have thought this through. The comment all of you keep on raising is that it's about reducing the budget, it's about cutting back on the budget, it's about balancing the budget. It's all you seem to be saying. When you reduce it to that extent then I wonder whether you're reflecting on what you are doing, because is it just about cutting at all costs, whatever its implications?

I say to you that whenever you cut something, you need to reflect on the implications. You save \$11 million, you say. Whether it's true or not, we don't know, but you say you save that. But a referendum, as many of my colleagues have said, will cost up to \$21 million. Is that a good thing? You'll be blowing it with one referendum, and I'm not sure you'll get greater democracy out of that. I'm not sure the public will be more greatly or more clearly politicized or have political consciousness raised as a result of a referendum, but it will cost money. You talk about a balanced budget, you've cut \$8.3 billion, you've broken your promise on health and education and social services, and you're going to cost us a hell of a lot of money when your income tax comes in.

But what I want to hear are from members, from mon ami M. Villeneuve and his beliefs and convictions before his election as a government member and what he had to say then, from him and Ernie Eves and all the others. Did those beliefs mean something then? What does the honest difference of opinion mean when you're in government versus when you were in opposition? What does it mean? You need to be accountable to that and you need to speak to that.

We need, M. Villeneuve, hearings so as to hear from the people you heard from. That's what I urge the Premier to do. Have hearings across Ontario, M. Villeneuve.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have the pleasure today to speak on Bill 81. I was under some misapprehension when I started this because I thought we were talking in caucus about smaller politicians, and I thought that we vertically disadvantaged were finally going to have some recognition in this House, but we're

not dealing with that; we're dealing with fewer politicians.

The position of our party has always been that smaller government is what we need in this province. That does mean fewer politicians — 27 to be exact. Fewer politicians mean \$11 million in savings. Some may say this isn't a lot of money when you look at the scheme of things, with \$55 billion as a budget. I think it's a lot of money, and it is an annual saving. That, together with a smaller cabinet, scrapping gold-plated MPP pensions and tax-free allowances, strict limits on government advertising and other savings, has reduced government administration costs by \$2 million. We're asking all Ontarians to tighten their belts and work harder, and we as MPPs must do the same.

1710

But there's an even more important issue than cost. That's democracy, the one person, one vote rule. Little did I know when I was studying political science at U of T some decades ago that there were still advocates of the rotten or pocket boroughs still left in any democracy. I remember reading about the growing cities of Manchester and Leeds in the 19th century that had no representation — can you imagine? — whereas there were certain areas in Britain at that time — Old Sarum had not one inhabitant, not one inhabitant, a real rotten borough. New Romney had eight voters. They were the worst. These injustices were not corrected in Britain until approximately 1867.

One thing the history books did not give me at that time was what arguments were used to justify the rotten boroughs. Why weren't they changed in medieval times? The history books are silent. It would seem there are no valid arguments. But that's not true. Here last week I saw rotten boroughs being defended. They weren't the extreme views of England days; however, there were great variances among ridings.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the member opposite is going to refer to some of the constituencies represented in this assembly as rotten boroughs, he should at least name the ones to which he's referring.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Martiniuk: In any event, during the week I saw one of the most able orators among our professional politicians, the member for Renfrew North, defend — in fact, he stated that we were against the one vote, one person rule. He spoke at length to, I think, defend the indefensible. As in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, basically he felt that all animals were equal but some animals were more equal than others.

How does one justify unequal ridings? That's really the important matter we're discussing today. You can say, "The status quo; don't change," but that's not very attractive. One has to approach it from a historical standpoint, and the word to use is "tradition." It is tradition to have inequity. For instance, a number of federal inequities have arisen over the last 100 years as this country has grown. Populations have shifted and those inequities are there. They are encompassed in a Constitution and we cannot change them, but they're not something we should be emulating. They're something to be discouraged. As a matter of fact, I think they show

that our federal system is not operating as flexibly as it should to reflect the modern times.

My particular riding, according to the 1986 census, has 80,670 voters in Cambridge. In Renfrew North, as an example, there are 65,760 voters. We seem therefore in Ontario to have two different kinds of voters, the ones in Cambridge and the ones in other areas where fewer or more electors may elect their particular representative.

There's a second argument that was given: It's just too much work; the riding is difficult to represent because of distance and topography. No matter that the riding may have been established over 50 years ago when we didn't have many of the modern means of communication and transportation we have today. Basically the argument is, "We don't want to work any harder in representing our riding," and I think it's as simple as this: We all have to work harder in this modern day. We're asking the constituents to work harder, we're asking them to work better, we're asking them to work smarter, and we have to too, as MPPs. Welcome to the real world.

In Cambridge, this bill means equality at last. To my riding of Cambridge this bill also means an end to the confusion of having two ridings, one federal and one provincial. The township of North Dumfries has in recent years been excluded from the provincial riding of Cambridge, where they have traditionally voted and where their natural geographic ties are. Welcome back to Cambridge riding, North Dumfries. I'm pleased to see many of my friends in North Dumfries back in the provincial fold. I also welcome the many friends in the Doon part of Kitchener, an area which is the most beautiful part of the region of Waterloo. Welcome again to our new friends in Doon. Welcome to a new Ontario, a leaner Ontario and a more democratic Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Hoy: The previous speaker waded into some remarks that were also echoed by the government House leader in the opening of this debate where he said he wanted clear and understandable government in the context of people being able to understand a federal riding as opposed to the provincial riding and thinking that by matching them there would be a clearer understanding of who represented which level of government.

The people in my area know full well which member represents the federal jurisdiction and which one represents the provincial jurisdiction. I think the proof of that is that they all knew who Brian Mulroney was, and in the last election they turfed him out resoundingly in Ontario, knowing full well that he was the government leader of the day. So I don't think there's any mass confusion among the constituents in the area I represent or indeed all the counties involved and counties bordering mine. I think people can clearly understand which government is in power. I don't think this bill need be introduced to educate the people as to who is representing them by matching riding for riding, federal and provincial.

Mr Wildman: I want to comment on the remarks of the member for Cambridge. Obviously, in the areas of southern Ontario that are growing in population there's no question there needs to be a redistribution, and no one in this House disputes that. Lest the member's remarks give the impression to those who are reading this debate

after or who are watching on TV that somehow some members of this House have said they're opposed to redistribution, I'm sure he didn't intend to give that impression. The fact is that redistribution usually takes place approximately every 10 years in this province.

What's different about this is that in every other instance since the 1960s an independent commission has been appointed which has looked at the boundaries, held hearings, listened to people's views and concerns from across the province, and then come up with lines that have tried to deal with rep by pop and geography. Then that has been debated in the House, and the final result is something that is understood by everybody.

What's different in this case is that this government has decided to abdicate its responsibility in dealing with provincial redistribution and to simply say it is going to mirror what the federal Liberal government has done. It is true they had an independent commission that held hearings, but it is quite an assumption to say that just because they had those hearings, what they decided for the federal, based on all the rules they have to deal with right across the country, was good for Ontario. This government doesn't often just assume that what the federal Liberal government does is good for Ontario. I don't understand why it's doing it in this instance.

1720

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond and compliment my good friend the member for Cambridge. He makes a very good argument, and the argument he's making is that the review is a normal process. As we all know, the member for Algoma has reminded us that there was an independent federal review. We promised that we'd align the provincial and federal boundaries. My constituents and many of the constituencies, as Mr Martiniuk has pointed out, are confused. The constituents today call my constituency office whether it's a federal issue or a provincial issue, and our job is to help them. I think every member in this House would recognize that we should be working more cooperatively and have smaller, more efficient and more focused members' duties and responsibilities. This is a first, important step to recognizing that. I, for one, think right now that it will provide much clearer roles between the federal and provincial responsibilities. Many of the times we can act on behalf in the case of federal issues, and I know today we do that.

I would like to point out also that the member for Algoma is quite right in saying that in Ontario, if you talk to the population, the person on the street, every one of them agrees with the sentiment here. We are in the lead position in the province of Ontario as far as elected representation is concerned, but as you well know we're looking at restructuring municipal levels of government, whether it's regional or local, and all sorts of board jurisdictions. We have to look at a new responsibility in government: Working more closely, not so politically, at a common agenda to do things more effectively and efficiently on behalf of the constituents. If they call my constituency office in Durham East, whether it's on an educational issue or a municipal issue, it's my job to act as the information broker and to act as a representative.

Wouldn't you agree that when you look at 109 trustees with nine school boards in Toronto, there's a case where there's overgovernment? How can we set an example without actions of our own?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I think the member for Cambridge made a very interesting speech. I have some difficulties with it. His assertion that this bill is representation by population is clearly wrong. It is not. If it was, every riding in this province would have the same number of people in it. That is not the case. There is still some variation between constituencies across the province. Why is that? It's because they're mirroring the federal redistribution exactly.

The federal government, when it redistributes, has an entire country to be concerned about. It has geography to be concerned about. It has to look at the quirks of Confederation. Prince Edward Island, with a population of about 125,000 people, has four members of the House of Commons. The Yukon has one. The Northwest Territories have two. It has to deal with the rural context in the entire country, not just Ontario. What we're saying over here is that the rules for Ontario should be rules for Ontario. We should have a look at our own geographic situation. Some members are going to have constituencies that reach from the equivalent of Windsor to Quebec City in terms of driving. I know because if I choose to run in a constituency like that, it would be the one I'm in.

I don't know any member of this Legislature who doesn't work 60, 70 or 80 hours a week. We're not going to work any more, because you can't. It won't be the members who are in big difficulty here; it will be the constituents.

I ask the member to reflect upon the fact that this is not representation by population. It has nothing to do with that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): What about me?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Toni will get a chance to respond as soon as I'm finished.

I'm very happy to be speaking on this bill, Bill 81, although obviously I have some very serious reservations about it and about what it does to representation. I think I would like to share just a few insights that the people in northern Ontario — the people of Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie, Thunder Bay, Timmins and North Bay — are telling me.

I had the opportunity over the course of the last couple of weeks to go around to those cities and talk to different people about your plan, this plan to reduce representation in northern Ontario in particular. Certainly the people of the north feel betrayed by the government. Their feeling of betrayal is based on their belief that A Voice for the North was a direction in which this government wanted to go. They didn't realize, ever, when they were reading A Voice for the North that the government was talking about reducing that voice by 33%, by one third. They feel betrayed that this government would suggest that, when in A Voice for the North there is absolutely no indication that this was going to happen in the north. A Voice for the North was exactly what was promoted by the Pro-

gressive Conservatives during the election. They didn't know that 33% of the representation in northern Ontario would vanish, would go.

They feel betrayed because this government doesn't want to listen to them. This government won't commit to public hearings. This government doesn't want to go to Sudbury, to North Bay, to Sault Ste Marie, to Timmins, to Thunder Bay, to Kenora, to Manitoulin Island and listen to what the people are saying. They're not interested in that.

Some of us who are sitting on both sides of the House will remember that at one time we had a very significant group of the population of northern Ontario who wanted to set up an entity unto themselves, a distinct province. We haven't heard that talk in 20-some years, yet whenever we go in the north now we're hearing that. People want to reassume the fight that Ed Diebal from North Bay initiated 20-some years ago. They want to talk seriously about leaving the province of Ontario. That's sad. That's sad that a government can make people so angry, that a government can make people so frustrated that a government doesn't want to listen to the people of an area that they want to talk about separating, about moving out, about setting up their own province. Whose fault is that? Certainly it's not the fault of the people who represent them. It's the fault of a government that will not and doesn't want to listen to them. That's one of the concerns the people have.

Another concern the people have is when they refer to the document and they see the Premier saying, "We want to restore the north to the forefront...treating northerners like a second-class fiefdom for southern bureaucrats and politicians...we are committing and committed to building a strong and vibrant northern Ontario." Well, how do they propose to do that? They proposed to do it by eliminating five seats in northern Ontario, by getting rid of representation so that the voice they want to hear, the voice they want to concentrate on will hopefully have a diminished stature in northern Ontario. That's not the case, because although we will be reducing by 33%, the voice — and it will be voices in opposition during this term and hopefully in government after the next election — will be loud and will be strong.

Let's clearly understand that this is politics at its worst, as far as I am concerned, because what we're seeing being done here is not redistribution for any really practical terms. We are seeing redistribution take place because Mike Harris and the government realize that they've turned off the north so badly they will not ever elect a Progressive Conservative member in northern Ontario, that they're willing to throw it away — with the exception of the Premier.

1730

As I go back and talk about people wanting to separate, that again is starting in North Bay, of all places. That talk is starting in North Bay, and that's pretty sad. It's actually a very good example because it shows that this government is not at all committed to listening to the people of northern Ontario.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): You've got that one wrong.

Mr Bartolucci: The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines says I have it wrong. Let's go then over to the summary part of page 3 of *A Voice for the North*: "Giving northerners a greater say on policies which affect them is our goal."

Yet if we look at what's happened to northern Ontario we see that there was the elimination of projects which would guarantee approximately 1,376 direct jobs and a total of 3,461 jobs which are gone, a total loss of investment of \$152 million — we had no say in that; the threat to amalgamate communities in northern Ontario without their input — we had no say in that; a cut of \$5.2 million to municipal road projects, 1996 and 1997 — we had no say in that; a reduced level of winter road maintenance which resulted in many accidents and in many cases court actions that haven't been resolved yet — no say in that.

So really the suggestion that northerners have a greater say in policies which affect them is another commitment or promise that's been broken by this government, and it's a sad commentary when a government who believes that input and getting public reaction before it makes decisions is the way to go has turned off and shut out northern Ontario.

Let me tell you that if that input is so great, I wonder: What's the stature of the northern support grant? Every mayor and reeve in northern Ontario wants to know. Most mayors and reeves have met with either the municipal affairs minister or the northern affairs minister or the parliamentary assistant and have demanded that that be enshrined in provincial legislation. What's happened? Nothing. They still have to yell and scream and beg and I'm afraid that the north is tired of having to do that with this government.

Clearly that's exactly what's happening at this — and you know, it's very interesting because this isn't shared by people who have been long supporters of the Tory government. If we look at a former cabinet minister in the Miller cabinet, Jim Gordon, he's leading the charge to save the northern support grant. He's leading the charge because he's disillusioned. This Tory government doesn't want to protect northern interests. Their *Voice for the North* was certainly a document that was filled with fancy language but had very little substance and very little commitment to it.

But, you know, they want to establish in the document a renewed mandate for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. Well, they did that by deregulating the bus industry, winding down the government's service to many rural communities in northern Ontario, a \$5-million cut to the ONTC which resulted in the cancellation of norOntair, leaving many communities in northern Ontario without any possibility of air service. That's their commitment to transportation in northern Ontario, quite a sad commentary on a government that wants people to believe that it represents the views of the average person.

I think if we only spend a second talking about health care, you could understand why the frustration level to want to go out on our own is there. The Big Blue Tory bulldozer has ransacked the communities of Thunder Bay and Sudbury when it comes to health care provisions, closing hospitals without any semblance of community input, without any belief that the communities' decided

opinion should be one that's at least listened to. Clearly that wasn't the case with this government and with the restructuring commission, its arm's-length body that's making the decision for the minister. That's another reason why the people think Bill 81 is simply another example of why this government for whatever reason doesn't want to give the north what is rightly its due.

The people in northern Ontario are exactly like the people in southern Ontario. We pay taxes; we want representation. Clearly we want the ability to have access to an MPP as readily and as easily as those in Nepean or Etobicoke-Rexdale or Scarborough East or Durham East would be able to get, and that's not going to be the same, simply because of the vast differences in areas of population in northern Ontario. I guess that's most concerning to me. The people across the way don't seem to understand that it's not the same in Sudbury East, in Algoma-Manitoulin, in Algoma, in Rainy River or Kenora or Thunder Bay as it is in Nepean or Scarborough East or Etobicoke-Rexdale.

People wanting to see an MPP in those areas have to ensure that they plan their day around that, because of the diverse distance that people have to travel. Yet this government for whatever reason, and it can only be that this government doesn't care about the people in northern Ontario, thinks that's not important, thinks there should be a fairer distribution of representation and number of constituents when it clearly doesn't make any sense at all to move in that direction.

What's most disturbing is that the people in northern Ontario are beginning to believe that the Harris government has pitted community against community, has pitted members of the community against itself. The reason for that is that past governments have formed their decision-making based on the needs of people, but decisions are not really being made by people in this government, and that's pretty sad. They're being made by the numbers themselves in the simple arithmetic of balanced equations.

The government, then, is not cutting anything, the numbers are, and that is the reason for this redistribution. It has everything to do with that balanced equation; it has nothing to do with people and representation. Trust me when I say the people of Ontario, whether it's northern Ontario, southern Ontario, eastern Ontario or western Ontario, want representation and they want the ability to get in touch with their MPP with relative ease, and that's not going to be the case in rural ridings or certainly in northern Ontario.

We can go on and quote what Noble Villeneuve said or Bob Runciman said or Margaret Marland said, or Ernie Eves or Mike Harris, but I don't want to do that. What I'd like to do is finish this little talk with a quote of a member who worked on this document and tried to sell this document and has been rather vocal this afternoon as I've been speaking, and that's MPP Bill Murdoch, when he said, "Northerners are sick and tired of people in Queen's Park telling them what to do." That's in the document. It's the only thing in the document that the people of northern Ontario now believe. You're right. They are tired of this government telling them what to do. They are tired of having southern Ontario decisions

imposed upon them without public input. They are tired of a government that doesn't care about them, that won't listen to them. Most of all, they are tired of a government that fails to understand that northern Ontario's contribution to this province far outweighs what they get back in return.

1740

To cut that representation by one third is wrong. It's callous. You're not only eliminating the voice for the north in government; what you are doing is not allowing the northern person to have his or her input into that government. For that, the people of northern Ontario have long memories.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments? The member for Wentworth North.

Mr Skarica: Mr Speaker, I'm quite happy to see you in the chair, because the other Speakers have refused to recognize me.

I'd like to address my remarks to the comments made by the members for Sault Ste Marie and Fort York. They made reference to the fact that this legislation diminishes the reputation of politicians. I hate to let this cat out of the bag, but by 1995, that had already happened.

I was a criminal lawyer for 15 years before that election, and when I announced to my friends that I was entering politics, they all uniformly told me the same thing: "You are crazy." That's what they all said. I have friends who went into the military and they were saluted when they announced that. I can tell you, no one saluted me. No one said to me, "God bless you, Toni, you're a politician now." I've had friends who became rock stars, and one even who went into the movies. They tell me stories about women banging at their doors and fainting in their presence. I can tell you, I banged on 10,000 doors and not one heart was stolen. Anyone looking at me today can feel the truth of that statement.

During the campaign, pretty typical was the response of this one woman. The first week I was campaigning, I knocked on a door and an elderly lady allowed me in and asked me what I was doing. I said I was a politician and so on, and she said, "I hate politicians." To be fair about it, she told me, as I was trying to say I wasn't a politician, "The only thing I hate more than politicians is lawyers." So that's a vote I didn't get.

How did it all happen? Perhaps one more little anecdotal story. I went into a coffee shop and there was a gentleman there who told me he was going to vote for me for the simple fact that he knew my two opponents were career politicians. He'd never heard of me, and that was good enough for his vote.

The reason it happened is that politicians are known for not keeping their word. Look at the conduct in the House. Numbers aren't important; competency is. If politicians had dignity and competency and kept their word, their reputations would be enhanced.

Mr Hoy: I want to congratulate the member for Sudbury on his remarks as they pertain mainly in the north where his comments were placed. Of course, rural Ontario and northern Ontario will be affected by this bill, not to mention that northern Ontario has a great expanse of what is commonly called rural Ontario.

I want to read from a Hansard debate of October 17, 1985: "As many of the previous speakers addressing this have mentioned, we do not want to see the rural part of Ontario further underrepresented. I personally feel, because of the location of Stormont, Dundas and Gengarry and the structure and makeup of rural areas, we must retain the status quo intact. It is a situation that was addressed by a number of my colleagues and I certainly agree with them. Rural Ontario must have more, not less, representation."

Those remarks come from page 855 of the Hansard debates and they were made by Noble Villeneuve, now Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Clearly the rural voice is being diminished, because I have not heard the minister get up and make this same comment here today, although there are future hours of debate and I look forward to his participation, as well as that of the parliamentary assistant for rural affairs who is part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and that of the parliamentary assistant for rural affairs as it pertains under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I wait for both of them to get up and speak about the diminished voice, the lessening of democracy in rural Ontario. I wait for their comments.

Mr Wildman: I hadn't intended to comment, but I was provoked by my friend from Wentworth North. I must say that I guess he was recognized by you, Mr Speaker, because a nomination must be worth something.

If, as the member indicates, the image of what he calls career politicians or politicians in general is as besmirched as he indicates, then should we in this House, who I honestly believe have members from all sides who work very hard for their constituents, be pandering to that view, or should we be attempting to inform ourselves and the members of the electorate about the role of politicians in our democratic society? What is the important role that elected members and others who do not gain election but who run for office play in the democratic system?

It's ironic that in eastern Europe and many parts of Latin America and Asia and Africa, people are struggling to establish the very kind of system that we have and take for granted in western Europe and North America. Surely we should be singing the praises. That's not to say there isn't room for improvement — all of us recognize that — but surely we shouldn't be pandering to the view that politicians are somehow just a bunch of people who are interested in ripping off the public, because I know that's not what any of us — I believe any of us — in this assembly are about.

Mr Murdoch: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I didn't know whether you were going to get me on or not. The first thing I'd like to do is thank the member for Sudbury for reading *A Voice for the North* and trying to understand it. As he said, he missed some parts in it. I can understand that maybe he forgot to read the *Common Sense Revolution*, but in there it did mention riding changes. I have to agree with him on some things that he said over there; some of the ridings may be fairly big.

I wonder if you'd speak, when you get your chance for your two minutes, about your MPs and see what they think about this, because you know these are the same ridings they are going to use at the federal level. You've

been saying quite a bit about how people want to talk to their MPPs. I'm sure they want to talk to their MPs at the same time. You're telling us they're having problems in the north, and I believe they are all Liberals in the north. These are some of your own colleagues you deal with all the time, so I hope you can suggest how they're going to work out.

As I said, I have some problems with this bill. We listened last week to the member for Renfrew North. He had a lot of good ideas and said that this is something that should be done but maybe not in this way. He doesn't quite agree with what's happening now, the same as myself. I have some problems with the bill and the way it's happening.

It's unfortunate that our friends in Ottawa, whoever they may be — and I like the word you used, the “wire-pullers” or whatever we want to call them, but as I say, we could have better names for them — who set this up missed some things, I think, in the north. There's a lot of area to travel up there and it's going to be hard for some people, and we do lose out in rural Ontario on this bill. There are some problems with it and hopefully in the future we can fix this bill up. I think after it is passed, we're going to have to sit down with the federal government and try to work out some better things for rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

Mr Bartolucci: First of all, a few comments to the member for Wentworth North. You're right when you say you're not a rock star, for sure, and you're no movie star, but what the member doesn't say is that a member of his own family said he hated politicians and wouldn't allow a sign to be put on his grass. But we won't mention that one.

The member for Essex-Kent understands the dilemmas that we in northern Ontario face because he comes from a rural riding. Clearly he understands and articulates quite well the problems we're going to have in northern Ontario. They're very, very important concerns, they're very, very real concerns, they're very, very pronounced concerns that have to be dealt with and aren't dealt with in the legislation, clearly, except in a negative way.

1750

The member for Algoma always asks very, very important rhetorical questions at the very beginning of a rebuttal or of a presentation, and I think they're the type of rhetorical questions that we, individually and collectively, should spend some time thinking about and reflecting upon.

Finally, I appreciate the member for Grey-Owen Sound's comments. I think they're fair. You'll notice, though, that the federal boundaries are increasing as opposed to the provincial boundaries decreasing, and northern Ontario reflects that as well. So I would suggest that what he says is right: There are major problems with the legislation that have to be dealt with. I agree with him. I didn't read all of *A Voice for the North*, he's right, because the Common Sense Revolution isn't in *A Voice for the North*. *A Voice for the North* was a very, very significant individual document because the north was so critically important to the then third party.

The Speaker: Time. Further debate?

Mr Wildman: I'll just open my remarks briefly by stating very clearly that in participating in this debate, I'm attempting to represent the concerns of my constituents as well as look at the overall needs of the province.

All of us recognize, as has been said a number of times in this debate, that there must and should be redistribution. In my experience in representing the people of Algoma for 21 years, I've seen three redistributions, and I recognize that there should be and there usually is one about every 10 years.

I also want to say I agree very much with the comments that were made by the member for Mississauga South in October 1985 when she spoke about redistribution in this Legislature. She said that we must be talking about equal and effective representation. The question is, what does that word “effective” mean? How do we define it? How do we deal with it in terms of the issues of rep by pop and geography and community of interest? Because those are all factors that have been taken into account before.

I came here, as my friend from Renfrew North did, the very month that the Camp commission made a historic report about electoral representation in this province, and I'll be referring to a number of things that Mr Camp, along with his colleagues, said in that report which I think have stood us in good stead since then.

But since time is running short, I will just read into the record a letter I received this morning, just coincidentally the day I was going to be intervening in this debate. This letter is addressed to the Honourable Al Leach, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, from the Algoma District Municipal Association.

Mr Michael Brown: I was there.

Mr Wildman: My friend from Algoma-Manitoulin was at the meeting — it was in his riding — and they passed a resolution. I'll just read this letter:

“Dear Mr Leach:

“The following resolution was passed at the last meeting of the Algoma District Municipal Association.”

I want to make clear, as my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin will attest, that there are municipal politicians of every political stripe represented in this organization and there are independents. So this is not a partisan resolution that was passed. It says:

“Whereas under proposed redistribution, the total number of ridings in northern Ontario would be reduced from 15 to 10; and

“Whereas the size of most northern ridings would be significantly increased, and this would result in less representation for the north at Queen's Park; and

“Whereas the present Algoma riding would be expanded to also include fully what is now the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, part of the current Nickel Belt riding and part of the Lake Nipigon riding,” the association “is concerned that the needs of northern Ontario residents have not been considered in this proposal...The proposed alignment would at least double travel time, thereby not only creating hardship for the MPP, but reducing the time available for dealing with the concerns of his constituents.” The association “is of the opinion that this alignment would significantly hamper the accessibility of northern Ontario residents to their MPP, as well as reduce

the voice of northern Ontario in the provincial Legislature. There is also a question as to whether the interests of such a vast riding would be compatible.

"Therefore be it resolved that the Algoma District Municipal Association endorse the resolution...and vehemently oppose any alteration of the electoral boundaries in the Algoma district, and further that this resolution be circulated," and it says to whom it's going to be circulated.

I must say that as the MPP representing most of that area now I don't agree with the final "be it resolved." I don't agree that there should not be any changes, but I certainly agree that those changes should take into account the concerns raised in the "whereases" that precede the resolution. That is what is wrong with what we're doing here in this assembly. That is what is wrong with what is being proposed by the government. It doesn't properly take into account those concerns.

These are concerns which were not prompted by me or my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin. This was a matter raised by municipal politicians who recognize that it is difficult for the people of their area, northern Ontario, now to be properly represented in debates about regulations and laws that affect all of us across the province.

They recognize that we in northern Ontario have only 9% of the population of this province. I would remind you that the 9% is larger than a number of other provinces' total populations, but we do only have 9% of the total population. We also have, despite some comments

that have been made in this debate about pocket boroughs and rotten boroughs and about the Canadian Shield not writing letters, 80% of the land mass of this province. I know that is hard for members in southern Ontario to comprehend.

Part of the problem relates to the Ministry of Transportation's insistence on having a roadmap that divides the province and has southern Ontario on one side and northern Ontario on the other side at different scales, so nobody in southern Ontario who looks at that roadmap really understands what the expanse of the area is and the distances involved.

I want to say, when I participate in this debate when it reconvenes, that I'm not only going to be talking about these very serious concerns about Bill 81 in northern Ontario. I want to talk about it in terms of what it means for all of Ontario, not just rural and northern Ontario, in terms of democracy, I believe, in this province.

I don't think the government has thought very clearly about what the ramifications of this bill are. If they have, as my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin suggests, it worries me seriously about their commitment to the people of this province. I hope I'm right in saying that they haven't taken into account the real ramifications.

With that, Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Wednesday 16 October 1996

Mercredi 16 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Yesterday I rose in this House to bring to members' attention the particulars of a meeting taking place with 11 organizations representing the disabled, the sick and the elderly. The focus of this meeting with the Toronto Transit Commission was to plead with this government to reinstate funding for the Wheel-Trans system.

Over 20 groups attended yesterday to reprimand the government on its actions, which are obviously driven more by the bottom line than by the needs of the disabled community. I want to once again draw to members' attention that many of these vulnerable constituents are doubly affected because they lack the strength and confidence to go through the screening and appeal processes.

I wish to address every member of this House in saying that the constituents from your riding are among those being affected by these cuts. People from your own community are pleading for this government assistance and cooperation.

The Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community and Social Services will be asked to restore funding for Wheel-Trans. I urge each member to speak up now on behalf of these potential shut-ins: the elderly, sick and disabled. I urge the government to reinstate funding for vital needs and the Wheel-Trans service.

WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My statement today is directed to the Minister of Health and the minister responsible for women's issues, who I hope will want to meet their obligation as advocates for women's reproductive choice. I urge them to speak up in cabinet in favour of securing a comprehensive policy on women's reproductive health, including support for RU-486, commonly known as the abortion pill, which has already cleared clinical trials and is in use in several countries in Europe.

RU-486 works by cutting off hormones needed to sustain pregnancy in the very early stages, literally in the hours and days following conception. This avoids the necessity of using more costly surgical procedures at a later date. The Minister of Finance will want to take note here as well.

It's apparent from media reports that the company that manufactures RU-486 will only seek trials if there is demonstrable government and societal support. I urge our government to begin today to create that climate of support so that this may join the range of options for women in the situation of an unwanted pregnancy.

Finally, Canadians continue to support a woman's right to reproductive choice. It's time for our provincial and federal governments to do the same by working together. It's time for a comprehensive policy on women's reproductive health that includes not only access to abortion services, but also sex education, contraception and disease prevention.

ONTARIO FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): In recognition of World Food Day and with the memory of Thanksgiving fresh in our minds, I would ask the honourable members to reflect on how fortunate we are to live in this nation, with its bounty of safe and nutritious food.

It is an unfortunate truth that even as we approach the 21st century the spectre of world hunger is still with us. Population growth, climatic change and shrinking arable land are pressuring our food supply and increasing our need for intensified agricultural production. But I am also pleased to say that Ontario's agriculture industry is contributing greatly to the fight against hunger.

Our farmers, through genetic selection, better management strategies and nutrition knowledge, are producing more food using less land, animals and feed than ever before. The efficiency of Ontario farmers is unparalleled. They are responsible for feeding 11 million Ontarians and millions more across the world.

Our agricultural food sector is contributing as well. Ontario food companies and grocery retailers are doing their part to ensure that children here at home receive proper nutrition at school. This government supports this initiative and this sector. Last May, our government provided up to \$5 million in startup funding for child nutrition programs.

We should both respect and applaud the efforts of the men and women of our agriculture and food system.

NIAGARA DETENTION CENTRE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Now that the government of Ontario has had time to reflect upon its announced decision to close the Niagara Detention Centre, many in Niagara hope that the minister will reconsider this ill-advised move which has been questioned by knowledgeable people in the field of correctional services. Not only will the closing of the centre be

unhelpful in the efficient operation of our local courts, but it will also reduce the opportunity for local organizations to counsel those who are detained in an effort to reduce the chances of prisoners recommitting crimes.

1340

With a capacity of 256 inmates and the fact that the building is only 22 years old, it appears to be foolish to close the facility and remove yet another 130 employment positions from the Niagara region.

Jim Wells, executive director of the John Howard Society in Niagara, predicts that within a few years the problem will force the province to change course and set up more community-based programs.

Anyone who is aware of the most effective way to rehabilitate offenders will realize that family contact and local services nearby reduce the chances of inmates remaining on the offending path. Along with the closing of the community resource centre or halfway house, we have taken a major step backward in correctional services in the Niagara region. I call upon the minister to change course and keep it open.

YMCA NORTHERN CHILD CARE CENTRE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In 1993, through the efforts of Alexander Henry High School staff, the child care barrier for young mothers, in their desire to return to school, was recognized as a need in my community. The Sault YMCA generously moved into action and put together a plan.

Research indicates that there were only a few programs in Canada with the uniqueness of this program of the YMCA Northern Child Care Centre: The parents had to maintain participation as full-time students in secondary school; the parents had to be receiving social assistance; the child care service was available to parents attending any high school within either board of education in Sault Ste Marie.

The YMCA Northern Child Care Centre has been open since January 31, 1994, and during those five semesters, ending June 1996, very positive results have been created. Some 62 different parents, with 73 children, have participated; 20 have graduated from high school, five continued in secondary school using the child care in September 1996 and nine parents had children graduate to elementary school. Child and parent are both gone.

In 1995 the provincial government's social assistance reform directly impacted this program in two ways: The parent, besides receiving a reduced amount of social assistance, was now required to pay a daily fee; more significantly, the program, which had been funded 100% by the province, would now revert back to the traditional funding split with the municipality at an 80%-20% divide. The YMCA and the Kiwanis Club in Sault Ste Marie have come to the aid of this centre and have saved it.

GREEN HOME CENTRE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Three months ago a new retail store called the Green Home Centre opened in the Quinte area. As an alternative to paying to take good-quality used building materials to a landfill, or to

dropping them at your curb, this store accepts materials at no cost. If you drop these items at the store, you receive a discount coupon for future purchases, or you can take advantage of their free pickup service.

Thanks to the wide acceptance and participation of businesses and individuals in the Quinte area, the Green Home Centre has so far diverted over 110 tonnes of building, construction and gardening material back into use. With an annual projection of over 400 tonnes, the store is already surpassing many other more established reuse centres across Ontario.

As an active member of the business community, the Green Home Centre provides customers with a wide variety of inexpensive building and gardening materials, saves municipalities infrastructure costs and provides a valuable alternative to the high cost of disposal.

I would like to commend the Green Home Centre on their efforts so far and wish them continued success in the future.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am pleased to announce the recipient of our first inaugural Dinosaur Award. I'd like to share with the House the criteria for the selection. The criteria for the minister who would receive the reward are: the one most likely to turn back the hands of time and bring Ontario back to the Stone Age; the ability to make shortsighted decisions, destroying everything in its path; the minister most likely to introduce legislation that shows a complete lack of regard for the public at large.

That recipient is none other than our Minister of Education and Training, Mr Snobelen, following a very long and arduous process, I must say, where there was a legion of ministers up for the award, including environment, women's affairs, but none other than —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member has a prop in front of her, and I think it's not proper to have this in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I was listening very carefully. I thought there could be some opportunity for her to be out of order. I've not heard it yet. You may continue.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I tell you that again, following a long —

The Speaker: I apologize to the member for Lambton. I didn't see the sign. If you could remove the sign, I'd appreciate it. I apologize.

Mrs Pupatello: Mr Speaker, if I may continue.

The Minister of Education and Training has shown, time and time again, his complete lack of regard for, in this case, students across Ontario. A cut of \$1 billion from education is seriously hampering the right of every student in Ontario for —

The Speaker: Your time is up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I understand that you had some time taken. I will say that the point of order raised by the member for Lambton was in order. You did have a sign up; it was your time. I think that if you had not had that

up, you would have had an opportunity to finish your statement. Let's move on.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to rise today and urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to move off his wishy-washy position regarding becoming involved in the impasse in the regional government of Hamilton-Wentworth. His position is, when called to step in and provide leadership, "I want them to sort it out but it sounds as if they may need some help in doing that." This is a long-standing problem recently brought to a head by a vote at regional council to abolish the council, which is juxtaposed against a position taken by the city of Hamilton to eliminate the region and go to a supercity where Hamilton would amalgamate all the outlying areas.

Both positions are untenable, and the minister knows that. I think he's hiding behind the fact that he's got a political problem locally. He's got two Tories who like the idea of the regional position, he's got one Tory who supports the idea of one tier and the minister stepping in and he's got a member on Hamilton Mountain who's got a foot in both camps.

I clearly have said that the minister ought to step in and use the constituent assembly report as the basis. There's a year-long public input process there. There's expert research material backing up their findings. Rather than hiding behind your partisan political problems, step in and show some leadership.

While you're so supportive of local options, remind the Minister of Health that we've already got a local option on health care that the government can stand behind and stay out of.

NATIONAL CO-OP WEEK

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): Please join me in welcoming to the Legislature the Canadian Co-operative Association and representatives of Ontario's co-ops and in congratulating them as they celebrate National Co-op Week.

Cooperatives have had a long and successful tradition here in Ontario and around the world. They show how much people can achieve when they work together, pool resources and share skills for the benefit of their members and communities. Co-ops help people obtain goods and services they may not otherwise be able to afford by pooling members' purchasing power.

Today more than two million people belong to Ontario's 1,400 co-ops and 500 credit unions and caisses populaires. With their combined assets of over \$15 billion, co-ops play a significant role in Ontario's economy.

This evening the Canadian Co-operative Association is hosting its annual MPP reception in the legislative dining room from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to attend and learn more about how co-ops benefit their communities.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to take this opportunity to inform the members of the

Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today members of Parliament from New South Wales, Mr Bryce Gaudry and Mr Andrew Fraser.

Could you also welcome Dr Abdul Salam Al Abbadi, Minister of Aqwaq, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BREAST CANCER

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I rise today during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to announce a very important investment to improve the health and lives of women in Ontario. This morning I had the privilege of joining the Premier at Princess Margaret Hospital to announce an Ontario government investment of \$24.3 million to expand the Ontario breast screening program.

There is no doubt that breast cancer exacts an all-too-devastating toll on women, their families and their friends. It's estimated that in this year alone about 7,100 Ontario women will develop breast cancer and that about 2,000 women will die from the disease.

This new funding will expand the capacity of the Ontario breast screening program by some 400%, meaning that by the year 2000 we will be able to screen 325,000 women each year at over 40 sites across the province. In the near term, new sites are expected to open in Chatham, Sarnia, Listowel, Niagara Falls, St Catharines, Belleville, Trenton, Ottawa, Timmins and Barrie, with others to follow over the next three years.

I commend the Ontario Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation and the Ontario breast screening program for their excellent work. In particular, I thank Dr Charles Hollenberg, the CEO of the Ontario Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, and Dr Susan Aitken, the director of the Ontario breast screening program. Their dedication to the better health of Ontarians is a model for all of us to follow.

I know too that there are many other volunteers and community groups around the province that also make a tremendous contribution to the ongoing success of this program. Your work is vitally important and I offer, on behalf of the government, my sincere appreciation to all of you.

To its credit, the previous Liberal government began a breast screening program in 1989 and the NDP modestly expanded it during its term in office. We are building today upon those beginnings.

The members of this House will know that this government is committed to ensuring that health care spending is maintained at \$17.4 billion. It's a daunting task in face of the \$2.1-billion cut or reduction in transfer payments from the federal Liberal government. To do this and to maintain quality in health care, we must restructure the health care system and we must reinvest the savings we achieve into community care, new drugs, technology and medical procedures that save lives, such as breast screening.

Unfortunately, breast cancer is one of the two leading causes of cancer deaths among Ontario women — lung cancer is the other — but we also know that most breast problems can be treated if they are discovered early. Studies have shown that screening women aged 50 and over in an organized program like the Ontario breast screening program can substantially reduce deaths from this disease.

What makes the Ontario breast screening program so important to women aged 50 and over is that the program provides much more than just a mammogram; it includes an examination by a specially trained nurse. All the sites that are part of the program have consistent and high-quality standards.

We are making this announcement today so thousands more Ontario women can have access to this organized screening program. The Ontario breast screening program wants to reach as many women over age 50 as possible, and to do that it provides information in French and five other languages: German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Chinese. A mobile van supports the program in north-western Ontario. It's stationed in Thunder Bay and travels to communities in that region of the province.

I firmly believe that our health care system is among the best in the world, one envied by many other countries. As minister, I intend to make sure we sustain and strengthen that excellence. This reinvestment in the Ontario breast screening program is just one more way we are committed to achieving that goal.

FIRE SERVICES

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm pleased to announce to the House that later today we will be introducing the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. This piece of legislation is the strongest of its kind in Canada. For the first time in nearly 50 years, the issues surrounding fire services are finally being dealt with.

This legislation will provide a new framework for fire protection in Ontario. It will improve public safety, streamline services and reduce costs. It will allow municipalities in all parts of the province to provide the highest possible level of fire safety in the most efficient way.

The legislation we are introducing is the product of a long process of consultation with municipalities, fire-fighters and fire chiefs. Some of the individuals involved in that process of consultation are in the gallery today: Harold Tulk, the president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; Tom Powell, the chief in Scarborough; Alan Speed, the chief in the city of North York; Peter Ferguson, the acting chief in the city of Toronto; Terry Allen, the chief of the city of Cambridge; Dave Carruthers, who's the president of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, representing Ontario's volunteers; and Bernie Moyle, the fire marshal of Ontario. Gentlemen, thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Change is long overdue and we are determined to complete the reform of this essential service. The result will be safer communities. This reform is a demonstration of the government's continuing commitment to public safety.

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act is part of the government's municipal restructuring program. It will give municipalities the flexibility to find the best ways of providing local services that meet local circumstances. It will ensure the effective delivery of fire protection services by municipalities, with the assistance of the province, but it will also encourage municipalities to match appropriate and affordable fire suppression facilities with effective fire prevention and public education programs. Such fire prevention and public education programs will be mandatory.

In addition, the Public Fire Safety Council will be strengthened to play a greater role in fire prevention and public education and to encourage greater participation in this field by the private sector.

We know that fire losses could have been avoided and many tragedies averted with more effective public education and with better fire prevention. Data gathered over the years by the office of the fire marshal indicates that 80% of fires are accidental and could have been avoided with greater fire prevention and public education. Meanwhile, more than 30 coroners' juries have called for a more coordinated approach to fire safety and fire protection. We support that approach and this legislation reflects those goals.

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act will streamline the legislation affecting fire protection in Ontario by consolidating no fewer than nine separate statutes. It will cut the red tape that has hampered the fire services and impeded the development of effective fire protection and fire prevention measures. To cite just one example, it will eliminate the duplication and redundancy that makes it necessary under the current system to have both an Accidental Fires Act and a Fire Accidents Act.

The new legislation will consolidate the rules affecting the fire services in a single, straightforward legislative framework. It will ensure that effective education and prevention programs are provided in every municipality in Ontario. It will give Ontario the strongest legislation of its kind in Canada and it will save lives.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was reading through the statement that was provided to the opposition, and the cheap shot at previous governments is not included —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for St Catharines, I have no idea what you're reading from. I'm not supplied a copy of the statement. I listened to the statement. I heard the statement. I heard nothing out of order.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On the point of order, Mr Speaker: If the minister intended the cheap shot to be included, there's obviously been a typing problem.

The Speaker: Responses. The member for Timiskaming.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I can clarify this for you, Mr Speaker. I have the complete statement of the minister. He neglected to read his fourth paragraph, which is a cheap shot at previous governments. I guess he decided not to do that.

Minister, in the compendium of this statement there are 12 different areas of the numerous acts that are going to be brought together here and it's going to take us a while

to get through them and to give you the comments and the critical look they deserve, but that will come at a later time in this House, in debate, and in committee.

1400

There are two concerns today, though, that I would certainly like to discuss with you, and those are the concern of offloading a lot of these responsibilities to municipalities and also the concern about the labour relations provisions. I think the minister must realize it's been an unwritten moral code among firefighters that they never go on strike, and for you today to put in this act that it is now illegal for them to go on strike smacks at the very heart of the firefighting code they're always there to protect and to save lives in this province.

We have never had a problem. There has never been an injury or a death caused in this province because firefighters refused the call of duty to protect the citizens. They don't need that, Minister, and I hope you will withdraw that some day, because that is a slap in the face of firefighters right across this province that should never happen.

The other change I'm a little concerned about is the private sector involvement that you want to see increased in the fire safety programs. We've already heard about user fees for fire inspections and car fires and perhaps we're going to see more of that. My colleague here tells me of a Scarborough nursing home that has its alarm so finely tuned up to code that they have had false alarms and now they face, in three months, \$3,000 worth of fines because they are bringing it up to the code they need to. I think we need a bit of latitude here and I hope you will rethink some of this before you bring forward the legislation.

BREAST CANCER

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I'd like to respond to the statement by the Minister of Health and say to him that I remember very well the day in 1989 when I stood in this Legislature as Minister of Health and announced the breast screening program. At that time I never imagined it would be beyond the year 2000 before all women in this province would have access to lifesaving breast screening. So while this announcement is welcome to the women of this province, it is yet four more years away from being fully available to the people of this province who need it, and that is women over the age of 50.

Similarly, along that line, I point out to the minister that I too congratulate the Ontario Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, Dr Charles Hollenberg, and Dr Susan Aitken, the director of the Ontario breast screening program. I also congratulate all those who are working on the front line of cancer care, particularly those who are dealing with unprecedented cuts to cancer care in the form of hospital base budgets unprecedented in this province. They are struggling and doing an incredible job against all odds. When Premier Harris said he would not touch one penny in health care, people thought that meant he would not cut base budgets of cancer hospitals, but we know the truth.

There is one issue I would like to commend to the minister, and that is that when the breast screening program was initially announced, it was always intended those programs would have direct contact with the women who would benefit; that is, the women over the age of 50. The ministry could provide and it was always intended would provide them with the ability to contact those people directly. I believe it was misguided to not permit that to happen and I hope the minister will reinstate the direct contact program. The breast screening programs want it, they need it, and unless women have real access by knowing it is available to them in their communities, then they will not be able to benefit from the lifesaving provisions of the breast screening program. I say to the minister, please look into the whole ability of those clinics to directly contact the women in those communities to allow that to occur. That is something I think he will agree is extremely important if he looks into it.

The last thing I want to say about this is that a lot of people have worked long and hard to make sure the breast screening program is of consistent quality across the province. I was pleased the minister acknowledged that because one of the advantages of a screening program is that you can have the kind of quality assurance this program has.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I want to respond briefly to the Minister of Health. I would like to congratulate him and the CEO of the Ontario Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation and the others who have worked very hard over the years with our government and the Liberal government to make sure we advance in the screening programs. It's a good thing we're moving forward today. More needs to be done and that's very important.

I would like to say that I wonder how many of these hospitals will still be left open and how many of these skilled nurses will still be there at the end of your cutting and slashing of the health care system in Ontario. I hope they all will be.

I also briefly want to comment that while I applaud this effort, I want to point out to the minister that it is now recognized that a majority of cancers are caused by external factors, including organochlorines and many other thousands of carcinogens out there that we now know contribute to cancer. As the minister knows, there was a resolution passed in this House that we form an all-party committee, and those with the expertise, to work on phasing out carcinogens and other cancer-causing substances in our environment. To date, Minister, you have done nothing. We know these chemicals cause the vast majority of cancers. So while I applaud this effort, we must continue to create even more screening for women. We absolutely now have to start on the front end and start preventing cancer. I urge the minister today to come forward and form this committee that is very badly needed.

FIRE SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to respond to the statement by the Solicitor General and

Minister of Correctional Services and to point out to him that he neglected to introduce some people who are in the west gallery who are probably very important to all of us: the professional firefighters of this province. Bruce Carpenter, who is the president of the Provincial Federation of Ontario Firefighters, and Jim Lee, who is the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, are here but they weren't included by you, Minister, in any consultations. They have asked you again and again for meaningful consultations —

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I ask those in the members' gallery, please, you're not allowed to shout out.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, you have refused again and again to have meaningful consultation with the men and women in this province who deliver front-line fire services. You have consultation with management, you have consultation with municipalities, but you have consistently refused to have meaningful consultation with the professional firefighters in this province. There's a good reason for that, because although there are many good things in the bill you propose to introduce today, one of the things you plan to do here is to change the labour relations regime for professional firefighters in this province. You don't mention that in your statement, but in the compendium it is very clear that there will be a change in that relationship.

For example, you are going to be imposing a 12-month probationary period regardless of what's in the collective agreements that are there. You are going to impose an aid provision that pays no attention to the contracting-out provisions in those collective agreements. What is more, Minister, it is not clear, because there has been no consultation, exactly what the role of the Ontario Labour Relations Board is going to be with respect to professional firefighters.

You owe it to the professional firefighters of this province to have real consultation with them. They wrote to you on October 7, right after the Crombie commission recommendations came out, and begged you to meet with them to talk about those recommendations, to talk about the problems, and you did not. You meet with these people on a hail-fellow-well-met basis, but you will not have meaningful consultation; you will not use their expertise and their commitment.

It is indeed, as my friend from Timiskaming said, a slap in the face for the professional firefighters of this province to have you include a no-strike provision. There has never been a work stoppage from professional firefighters in this province. That is not something they would condone. They have never condoned it. They find it insulting that your act is a thinly veiled attempt to destroy their ability to collectively bargain on behalf of their members.

One of the other issues is that you've made fire prevention programs mandatory. You still have not made fire suppression services mandatory for municipalities in this province, according to your own compendium. It is very real that we need prevention services, but suppression is also important.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My first question is to the Solicitor General and it concerns your ongoing coverup of the involvement of organized crime in the manufacturing and distribution of video slot machines in this province. I use the term "coverup" deliberately, because the more we know about what your government knew and when they knew it, the more it becomes clear how sordid this video gambling affair is.

1410

Minister, I have here in my hands a letter from the Metropolitan Toronto Police and in it the police are very, very clear and they say, and I quote: "I believe those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect." It also says that they would like to draw your attention to the position of the Criminal Intelligence Service chair that the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario is not in favour of video lottery terminals.

My question is this: Does it not occur to you, Mr Solicitor General, as the top cop in this province, to tell the people of this province that there are major concerns about the involvement of organized crime in the introduction of slot machines and is that not your responsibility to prepare a special report?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I resent the use of the term "coverup." I think if there is a coverup here perhaps it's the fact that we barely recognize this member. Perhaps there's a coverup under way in terms of his membership in this assembly, I'm not sure. But with respect to a coverup about —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Solicitor General.

Hon Mr Runciman: I've indicated on a number of occasions now that this is not a government report, it was commissioned by the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. Those reports are developed on a number of occasions throughout the year by CISO and government is not privy to the existence of those reports, let alone gaining access to them.

I've indicated that it would be unprecedented for a member of government, especially a Solicitor General, to request access to that kind of a report. The fact that this report was developed was public knowledge back in March and I indicated earlier the standing committee reviewing Bill 75 opted not to call any witnesses from CISO.

Mr Kennedy: It's becoming very clear to everyone in this House and to the public of Ontario how desperate the government is, if that's the nature of the answer, the best answer the Solicitor General can muster.

We've heard that you maybe were out of the loop so badly that you didn't know the report existed; then you remember reading the report in your absentmindedness. But there's a third explanation: Your government is so desperate for the money coming from slot machines it's prepared to go to any lengths to cover up this information

which we raised in committee. This letter from the Metropolitan police was raised in committee in August and your government has deliberately ignored it.

Minister, I have in my hand a second public document, this time a study of video slot machines by the coordinated law enforcement units in British Columbia, released to the public and in it you can read about how in New Brunswick the government intended to own slot machines when they were legalized. Organized criminals became some of the legal owners. You'll find out about warehouse bombings by some of the companies that they name in Quebec.

My question, Mr Solicitor General, is, if the Attorney General's office in British Columbia can prepare and publicly release a study, not just in BC but across Canada, can't you produce that study here and live up to your responsibility as Solicitor General to tell us how organized crime is affecting video slot machines in this province?

Hon Mr Runciman: The member indicated in his question, I think, that this was prepared by the Ministry of the Attorney General for the Attorney General in British Columbia. There's a significant difference here. We're talking about an agency which is not connected in any way, shape or form with government. This is an independent body that developed this report, so I think there's a very clear distinction.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order please, the member for Sudbury.

Hon Mr Runciman: In terms of policing reports or other reports, the Canadian chiefs' association has made public a report dealing with this question and takes quite the opposite view with respect to legalization of VLTs. In fact, legalization, the chiefs' report indicates, will have an impact on the proliferation of illegal machines in any jurisdiction.

There are a variety of reports on this, but in terms of getting feedback from the policing community, I do meet with Chief Fantino, I've indicated that, and other members of the chiefs on a number of occasions. They've conveyed their concerns, but with respect to details on this particular report, that remains a document for the intelligence community in policing.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, let me just summarize what the police have told you. The RCMP have told us that organized crime is moving in on gambling in Canada just when police are losing their manpower, an area where you do have some responsibility, if small in this House. You don't need a briefing note to see that, it's been in the newspaper. The Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario has told us that organized crime is involved. The head of that service has said they do not want video gambling machines. In New Brunswick we found that organized crime does get involved when government tries to legalize and the police here in Metro Toronto have told you that legalized slot machines will not drive out illegal ones.

Minister, are you so reckless and irresponsible that you would ignore the advice of the police? Are you so consumed, with your colleagues, by the need for the money that you will not live up to your responsibility and tell the Premier and your colleagues that this bill has to

be withdrawn, that Bill 75 cannot proceed until we fully understand the effects of organized crime on video slot machines?

Hon Mr Runciman: It's somewhat ironic that if anyone promoted the growth of organized gambling in this province it was the Liberals in a very deregulated way.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Essex South, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: We have recognized legitimate concerns with respect to organized crime and we are addressing them in a very effective way. The Treasurer has made comments with respect to ensuring that adequate resources are put into this. We've made that commitment time and time again. If there are policing concerns, we are not hearing them. We've indicated to the policing community that we're going to address these concerns that they've had in earlier times related to initiatives undertaken by the Liberals and the NDP, that we are going to deal with this concern in a much more effective way than has been the case in the past. We're committed to that.

Mr Kennedy: My second question is also to the Solicitor General on the same subject. This morning my office spoke to the acting deputy chief of the Metropolitan Police Force, Paul Gottschalk. Minister, the deputy chief, available by telephone, was very clear: Video gambling machines will be a nightmare for police in this city.

Who are we supposed to believe? Are we supposed to believe that you know more about policing and the impact of these machines or the deputy police chief who says your plan will lead to more crime and will be a nightmare for police?

Hon Mr Runciman: I've indicated to you earlier that in terms of the policing community feedback we've had, it's been on the basis that if you're moving ahead with the legalization of VLTs, you ensure that adequate resources are committed to effective policing, and we've made that commitment from day one.

Mr Kennedy: We see nothing of that commitment reflected anywhere. We have reports from the OPP, from the RCMP, from Chief Fantino, who heads up the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, and all of them are saying the same thing. They fear that your plan to bring video slot machines out of controlled environments and into every bar and restaurant across Ontario will create great new costs. So for example, in Metropolitan Toronto, there are four officers currently dealing with gambling. They would need 100 even to begin to have an impact.

Mr Solicitor General, we're asking you today, are you prepared to make that commitment, to make that 25-fold increase in policing to be able to deal with this and is that where you want to see the criminal resources — the resources to deal with crime — in this province directed, to this new criminal activity that you'll be developing just because your government is so desperate to have the money from these video gambling machines? Will you make that commitment today, Mr Solicitor General?

Hon Mr Runciman: One of the things we've heard is the widespread proliferation of illegal machines in this

province, not just machines but with betting, gaming houses as well. That kind of a concern and issue has not been dealt with in an effective way by either the Liberal government or the NDP government. We've made a commitment that we are going to deal with those kinds of issues in a very effective way, unlike what happened in the past. I can indicate to the member that we will have some announcements in that regard in the not-too-distant future.

Mr Kennedy: It's very hard to believe that this is the government that ran on a law-and-order platform in the last election. People all across the province are watching and wondering what is happening to that idea. Your scheme to bring video gambling machines into every bar and restaurant will lead to more crime. You know it, the police know it and everyone in this province is starting to know it. It's not just a question of the number of machines; it's a question of being able to open them up and tell whether they're legal or illegal, it's a question of whether they're controlled and it's a question of having the manpower far beyond anything that's been talked about to enforce it.

1420

Minister, why don't you admit that this government does not care about the new crime that you're bringing on, that the money matters more, that you don't care what impact they'll have on vulnerable people and creating new addictions and that the responsibilities of ensuring that the police forces aren't overwhelmed by this new source of crime do not matter to this government, because there is nothing at all in the legislation, not one line —

The Speaker: Question?

Mr Kennedy: Tell us, Mr Solicitor General, once more whether you will hold up the legislation and allow us to introduce safety measures so that organized crime doesn't become proliferated simply because of the decisions of your government.

Hon Mr Runciman: I've indicated quite clearly the kinds of initiatives we're going to undertake to ensure that the concerns the member is expressing do not develop —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Oakwood, come to order.

Hon Mr Runciman: — unlike what his government did while it was in power in 1985 to 1990 —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Hon Mr Runciman: — and unlike what the NDP did during its tenure in power. For this member to indicate that we are somehow not fulfilling our commitment with respect to justice issues, I can say that the justice community, the law enforcement community, feels much more confident —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): We said no to VLTs. They were proposed to us and we said no to VLTs.

The Speaker: The member for Algoma, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: — with this party in power than it ever did during the days of those two parties in power. You can look at a whole range of issues in the justice

field, ranging from strict discipline and dealing with young offenders in a much more effective way, dealing with victims of crime —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: — in a much more effective way, being accessible to the police community on virtually every issue.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: We have a record that we're very proud of with respect to justice issues. We have nothing to apologize for. Those two parties across the floor have a great deal to apologize for.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Interjections.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Speaker, you might want to get an aspirin for the Solicitor General.

The Speaker: Order; I can't hear you. Order.

Mr Hampton: I have an urgent question for the Premier; it concerns the situation at General Motors. But the Premier's not here today, so I'll save that question for tomorrow. Hopefully, he'll be here.

The Speaker: Who's your question to?

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. Last spring, you and the Premier said very clearly, "We are through cutting." You said that no more cuts would be necessary, that your scheme to give \$6 billion to the wealthiest people in the province would finance itself. In fact, the Premier very clearly said: "We're done cutting. We're through cutting." Now we're hearing from Conservative officials who say that another \$3 billion will have to be cut.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance, are you going to cut another \$3 billion, and where is it going to come from? From health care, from education, from seniors, from kids, from communities? Where are you going to make the cuts, Minister?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the leader of the third party: As he fully knows, in the Common Sense document our government committed to reducing expenditures by some \$6 billion. He should know better than anybody else and his party should know better than any other party in the Legislature that there is absolutely no way one was going to achieve the deficit target that the previous government had set and that in fact if prompt action wasn't taken, the deficit for the 1995-96 fiscal year, the deficit for the year we went into government —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, third party.

Hon Mr Eves: — would have been \$11.2 billion. So we have said all along that we would have to reduce the \$6 billion that we committed to doing plus the \$2 billion that they padded the books by before they left office in June 1995.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: The Conservative members can raise as much noise as they want. The real problem you've got,

Deputy Premier, is you gave away \$6 billion in revenue. The budget would be within the possibility of balancing had you not given away \$6 billion, and \$6 billion more next year and more the year after that, to your wealthy friends. That's your problem, and that's why you're going to have to cut more.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): What are you talking about? You're so out to lunch you don't know what you're talking about.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the government whip to come to order and the Attorney General. Order. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: You see, the Attorney General is more worried about how much money he is going to get by this phoney tax break than he is worried about the law enforcement system in the province.

Deputy Premier, we see how your phoney tax scheme is working. The president of the Bank of Commerce is going to get about a \$50,000 tax break, the president of the Royal Bank is going to get about a \$50,000 tax break, but we're not seeing any jobs for working people. Thirty-five thousand jobs disappeared in September, and there are 57,000 more people unemployed now than last year at this time.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: I want to ask you again, how much are you going to cut? How much will you have to cut to finance your phoney tax scheme, and where are you going to cut? Are you going to take it from kids? Are you going to take it from seniors?

The Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Hampton: Are you going to take it from law enforcement? Are you going to take it from health care? Where is it going to come from?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the member might be interested to know that there were 99,000 more people working in the province of Ontario in September 1996 than were working in September 1995. There are 99,000 more people who have jobs. Coming from a party that in its entire tenure in government lost 10,000 jobs in the province in five years, why are you standing here criticizing a government that was in place while 99,000 jobs were being created?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): It's what you said you were going to do. The unemployment rate is up.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: What is wrong with you?

Mr Hampton: Only a Conservative government that doesn't give a whit, doesn't give a care about the unemployed would brag when the unemployment rate goes from 8.5% to 9.2% and 35,000 jobs are lost in one month.

I've asked the question twice and I'm going to ask it again. We know you're prepared to climb in bed with organized crime to get money to finance your tax break. We know that; we've seen that over the last couple of weeks. You're quite prepared to climb in bed with organized crime in order to get money out of video slot machines.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the leader of the third party to withdraw that comment. That is totally unparliamentary and unacceptable.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw the comment. The government is prepared to dance with organized crime in terms of video slot machines to get the money.

The Speaker: Order. Finally, no dancing or climbing into bed. I would ask you to withdraw the comment.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw that. The government is prepared to have a cosy relationship with organized crime in terms of video slot machines.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I say to the leader of the third party, this is the final warning. Either withdraw the comment —

Interjections.

The Speaker: With all due respect to the third party and the member for Windsor-Riverside, I think associating the government with organized crime is out of order. I ask the leader —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Finally, I say to the leader of the third party, either withdraw the comment —

Mr Hampton: The government is prepared to ignore the involvement of organized crime with video slot machines because it is so desperate for revenue to finance its tax break. But we know that in addition to taking the money from video slot machines, you're going to have to make some cuts.

1430

I ask you again: Where are you going to cut? Is it going to be kids this time? Is it going to be seniors? Is it going to be schools? Is it going to be health care? Where are you going to cut now in order to finance your phoney tax scheme for the wealthy?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member knows full well that we have indicated all along that we would have to make \$8 billion worth of cuts on an annualized basis to achieve our targets.

Mr Marchese: Try answering the question, Ernie. Don't be ignoring it.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York, I warn you to come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: Unlike the previous government that missed its deficit target by \$2 billion in one year, our target for last year was \$9.3 billion; we achieved \$8.7 billion. We will continue to achieve our deficit targets. We will balance the books in the province of Ontario by the year 2000 despite the efforts of your party and your party to build up a \$100-billion debt.

We're doing all this while leaving more money in the hands of hardworking, taxpaying Ontarians. I know you don't want to hear that.

Mr Hampton: The president of the Bank of Commerce, Frank Stronach, the president of the Royal Bank, the president of the chamber of commerce, they all thank you, Ernie.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party, come to order.

Hon Mr Eves: The fact is that there are 99,000 more people working today in the province of Ontario —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the leader of the third party to come to order. It's question period. You get to put the questions; they get to answer them.

A new question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the government, even their own right-wing think tank, the Fraser Institute, says they're going to have to cut \$2 billion. So come clean and say where you're going to cut it.

TVONTARIO

TÉLÉVISION FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have another question on cuts. It's to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. You are racing ahead with your plans to privatize some of the most valuable public assets in this province. You're going to sell off important capital assets, again because you need the money to finance your tax break. In your case, it's TVOntario that's going to be the victim: TVOntario, which is watched by literally hundreds of thousands of children across this province, which provides non-violent, educational television.

I want to ask the minister, as you sell TVOntario in order to meet your bottom line reduction targets, what do you have to say to those kids who enjoy high-quality, educational, violence-free and commercial-free television on TVOntario? What do you have to say to them?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): To the leader of the third party, first of all, it should come as no surprise to anyone in this House that we have been saying — indeed we identified TVO as a potential candidate for privatization as early as May 1995 when we announced it in the Common Sense Revolution. So clearly it should come as no surprise that TVO is indeed a candidate for privatization.

Having said that, as I have consistently said for the last 15 or 16 months, until that privatization framework has been completed, no decisions will be made with respect to TVO.

Mr Hampton: As I suspected, the minister has nothing to say to the children of Ontario about violence-free television, about educational television. That's really not what she's concerned about.

Une autre question : qu'est-ce qui se passe avec TFO ? Si vous privatisez TVOntario, avez-vous des plans pour assurer la survie de la chaîne française, TFO ?

Je demande à la ministre, dans votre acte pour liquider tous les biens de la province, avez-vous oublié l'importance de TFO pour les francophones de la province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

M. Hampton : — comme source d'information et enrichissement culturel ? Pouvez-vous assurer l'avenir de La Chaîne pour les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes ?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Again to the leader of the third party: I don't know how many ways I can say it. The fact is that the privatization framework has not been completed yet, and until such time as it is, no decisions will be made with respect to TVO, TFO or the privatization of any public assets.

Mr Hampton: It's obvious that the minister has nothing to say to the francophone population of Ontario either in terms of the importance of TFO, so let me try again.

We recognize that you want to work out the framework with your corporate friends before you sell off TVOntario and TFO. We understand that. We understand that the minister of privatization has to meet with the brokers on Bay Street and make sure they get their commissions and their fees when you sell it off. We understand all that stuff.

What I'm asking you is, as the minister responsible, do you not see a place in Ontario for commercial-free, violence-free educational television for children? Do you not see a place in Ontario for one of the best public television networks in North America?

Hon Ms Mushinski: I have some difficulty with the leader of the third party understanding what we're saying with respect to this issue. We clearly stated in the Common Sense Revolution and during the election last year that TVO is a potential candidate for privatization. That was something, by the way, we did take to the taxpayers of this province.

We are taking a very careful approach to the whole issue of privatization. TVO clearly has been identified as a potential candidate, but until such time as any decisions have been made with respect to privatization, TVO will remain as it is.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is for the Minister of Health. Are you aware that Mrs Ella Galligan, a 102-year-old widow living in Pembroke, Ontario, has just been told by your officials that effective November 30, 1996, she will not only lose her OHIP coverage but her OHIP card because, in the view of the Ontario Ministry of Health, she is a refugee claimant?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'm not aware of that case. I will take the question on notice and be happy to get back to the member with the appropriate answer.

Mr Conway: Minister, let me tell you a little bit about Mrs Ella Galligan of Pembroke, Ontario, who your department now thinks is a refugee claimant. She's a 102-year-old citizen of our community. She is the daughter of a former member of Parliament. She is the wife of our long-term county court judge. She is the mother of Mr Justice Patrick Galligan, recently retired from the Ontario Supreme Court. She is a lifetime resident of the Ottawa Valley, a distinguished citizen. Her family wants to know not only that you're going to fix this, but how it is possible that someone so distinguished ends up in the government computers of Mike Harris's Ontario as a refugee claimant.

Hon Mr Wilson: I would remind the honourable member that when the Liberal government sent out blank forms for people to get their health cards in 1986, parrots and dogs and cats and other family pets were issued health cards by that government. In fact, 12 million people were issued health cards for a population of 10 million. I have devoted most of my career to straight-

ening out the health card system, and I'm doing that as we speak.

I will take the question on notice and get back to the honourable member with the specific case and correct any errors that may have occurred, but I certainly don't need any lectures about inappropriate databases from the Liberals.

1440

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question. The member for Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I'm trying, Mr Speaker; I'm trying.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole, come to order, please. The member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Finance in his role as chairman of the cabinet committee for privatization. We know that the two ministers who have been involved with the whole issue of Ontario Hydro have been making somewhat contradictory statements in the last few days.

On Monday, the Minister of Environment and Energy said that a decision on privatization was two to four years away and that indeed the decision was being put on the back burner. Yesterday, your minister for privatization, in response to a question from my colleague from Lake Nipigon, danced around the issue and wouldn't make any kind of commitment and simply wouldn't deny or confirm what the Minister of Energy and Environment had said.

This is not a trivial matter. There is a lot of anxiety and concern out there about the future of Ontario Hydro. I wonder if you could confirm now that indeed the Minister of Energy and Environment was correct that the whole issue of privatization of Hydro is not on.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): There are many issues around the privatization process which certainly are far from being resolved, and I can assure him that absolutely no decisions have been made with respect to privatization of any entity in the province of Ontario, let alone an entity with the importance of Ontario Hydro.

I will say to him that the government is reviewing the MacDonald report and that we have not responded to the same, as I'm sure he is aware. When the government has prepared a response to react to the MacDonald report, that will be forthcoming.

Mr Laughren: I think that's simply not fair. There's a number of people who are concerned and anxious about the future of Ontario Hydro out there. Our caucus has been holding a series of public forums across the province; we haven't completed them yet. Environics has done a poll which showed that 66% of the population of this province are opposed to privatization of Hydro and only 24% are in favour of it.

The MacDonald report we know has recommended that the most lucrative parts of Ontario Hydro be sold off,

presumably to your friends in the private sector, while the public would be stuck with the more expensive ways of generating power in the province. I believe that the people in this province deserve a more definitive answer in terms of a time frame for what your intentions are re the privatization of Ontario Hydro. It's simply not fair to leave it hanging out there and people not knowing what the future of this very important asset is.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Laughren: So could you, at the very least, give us a time frame, tell us that this is not on in the next three to four years?

Hon Mr Eves: We have made absolutely no decisions about any privatization candidate, let alone Ontario Hydro. I can say to —

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): When are you going to?

Hon Mr Eves: "When am I going to?" the honourable member for Windsor-Riverside puts it. We are currently trying to establish a process for privatization in the province of Ontario. We will look at various candidates as they come forward. Ontario Hydro has certainly not even been thought of or mentioned in any deliberations to this point in time, and I cannot see any such deliberations taking place in the near future.

I think the most important thing for the government to do at this particular moment in time with respect to Ontario Hydro is to review the MacDonald report and get back with a response to the people of Ontario. I quite agree with the member for Nickel Belt, Ontario Hydro is —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Eves: — indeed a very important institution in this province and the generation of electricity in the province and power in the province is a matter that is of utmost importance to the government and we will certainly proceed in due course.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Next week is Small Business Week throughout Ontario. It's an important week that recognizes the value of hardworking, risk-taking small business people.

As a former small business person for the past 20 years, I realize the importance of the little guy in the big corporate world. Studies have shown small business creates 85% of all new jobs. Will the minister inform the House what the government is doing to encourage this valuable Ontario resource, small business people, to start, expand and grow their businesses?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Yes, I am very happy to respond to the member for Scarborough West. He is the Brown on the right side of the House.

I would like to start off by reading a quote, if I may, from Catherine Swift, who is the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Ms Swift says: "The current Ontario government is clearly more small-business-oriented than any of its predecessors. It has

already begun to translate into more jobs for Ontarians as small firms remain the dominant job creators in the economy."

We have done much, as Ms Swift has said, but I'd like to just give a few points to back that up. First of all, we are providing government incentives to the banking industry to lend to small businesses. Secondly, we are cutting the employer health tax on small businesses, as we all know. We're committed to removing barriers that limit lending by loan and trust companies, we are reforming the Labour Relations Act and we have reduced the personal income tax rates.

Mr Jim Brown: From my experience, Minister, small business is a job generator. Small business growth is essential for Ontario's prosperity. What is the economic impact of these hardworking, dedicated small entrepreneurs? What percentage of the private sector does small business comprise?

Hon Mr Saunderson: Small businesses make up 43% of the private sector; 297,000 small businesses exist in Ontario and we have talked with almost 400 small businesses lately.

I'd like to give you some statistics from those calls: Twenty-three per cent of those calls were with companies founded by women. Fifty-five per cent are companies in the 30-to-44 age group. Those people have a lot of faith in what we are doing. Sixty-seven per cent of those people used their own savings and did not ask for any government grants. Forty-six per cent say they will bill \$75,000 in their first year of operations. I'd like to conclude my answer by saying that there will be more detail provided next week by my parliamentary assistant, Mr Joe Spina, for Small Business Week.

WATER TESTING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is about small business in northwestern Ontario and it's to the Minister of Environment and Energy.

Minister, because of your government's decision to close the Thunder Bay Ministry of Environment laboratory, trailer park owners in northwestern Ontario have been told that they must now pay for the cost of water testing. This will result in a cost of \$10,000 annually to the trailer park owners, who are already finding it hard to make ends meet.

Minister, what assistance will you provide these trailer park owners, who tell me that if they are required to pay the \$10,000 water testing costs, many of them will have no alternative but to go bankrupt?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): We are committed to a user pay program in the ministry with regard to water testing by people who are using the service. I will work, of course, with any individual case where this would be an undue financial burden. We would be glad to deal with those on an individual basis.

Mr Miclash: Minister, that's not what your ministry has told these trailer park owners in northwestern Ontario. You stated yesterday in question period that you were satisfied that you were dealing with the water testing situation in this province. Hundreds of people

living in trailer parks throughout northwestern Ontario are not as satisfied as you seem to be.

I am talking about trailer park owners who just cannot make ends meet because of the extra \$10,000, the fee for water testing services. These owners want to stay in business, but feel the policies that you and your government are putting forward are having a devastating effect on them.

Minister, one park owner has already gone bankrupt and many more are hurting and going in that direction. What concrete action will you take today to ensure that these trailer park owners will not have to go out of business because of your decision to close the Thunder Bay lab? More importantly, what comfort can you provide the hundreds of residents who are worried about the effect your decision to close the lab will have on them and, more importantly, on their drinking water?

Hon Mr Sterling: Through the Ministry of Housing we will be providing trailer park owners with a better opportunity to recapture some costs which are necessary to deal with their particular situation. I hope that would be some partial solution for these owners. However, we believe this is a cost of operation. We believe that people who are on municipal water pay for their municipal water and the testing associated with that. We believe that these businesses, along with some help through the Ministry of Housing in recapturing these costs, through the people who are benefiting from this particular service, should in fact bear that cost.

1450

PREMIER'S VISIT TO SAULT STE MARIE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In the absence of the Premier, my question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He will know that last Thursday the Premier and a number of his cabinet colleagues came to Sault Ste Marie for a Progressive Conservative fund-raising dinner. Six weeks before that, the mayors and reeves of Algoma got very excited about this because they saw in it an opportunity for them to have a meeting with the Premier when he came. The man was coming; they were going to have their meeting. They have a lot of issues they need to discuss with this person and with some of his cabinet.

It turns out, though, at the end of the day they were told he was coming late and leaving early; it turns out he actually came early and left late. Nevertheless, the bottom line was that any mayor or councillor or reeve of Algoma who wanted to have time with the Premier when he came to Sault Ste Marie last Thursday —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Martin: — had to fork out, either personally or out of municipal dollars, \$150 to go to a Progressive Conservative fund-raising dinner —

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Martin: — to talk to the Premier of this province. Is this to become the norm in Ontario that duly elected mayors and reeves and councillors have to —

The Speaker: The question's been put.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): To the member of

the third party, I'd just like to remind him that members of this government and members of the cabinet, including the Premier, meet with municipal leaders right across the whole province and especially in northern Ontario. I've talked to Mayor Butland, I've met with most of the mayors right across northern Ontario and their input is welcome and accepted by this government. We're treating northern Ontario fairly.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): To the same minister, the fact is that the mayors around Sault Ste Marie, to meet with the Premier, had to pay \$150 a plate to the Tory fund-raisers in Sault Ste Marie. That's how they got in. It was the only way. Now we know the Premier's coming to Timmins tomorrow, on Thursday. Is this what you plan on doing as well? Will the mayor of Timmins and other mayors around have to fork out 150 bucks to be able to meet with the Premier of the province? Will they?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The answer is no.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I'd like to put a question to the Minister of Transportation. There's been a great deal of concern in my riding over Highway 6, running through Hamilton-Wentworth down into the Caledonia area. Over the years there have been some fatalities there. There have been a number of serious accidents. It's caused some frustration and made some area residents quite upset. I would like to know if the minister could inform my constituents what plans are set for the area so that he can address their concerns.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member for Wentworth East for his question. Certainly I would like to assure my colleague that the ministry is working with the public and local agencies to address areas of concern in order to reduce accidents and improve operation of Highway 6. In fact, some time later this year ministry staff will be holding a public consultation session to work directly with everyone concerned about safety on this highway.

Our project management staff will bring —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Palladini: — their design drawings and they will talk about what we are going to do with Highway 6. This will be an information-sharing session. Concerned citizens will also be able to express their views, so we have every intention of following through on that.

Mr Doyle: I would like to thank the minister for that, and I'm sure the Safe on 6 committee will be happy to hear that as well. The Safe on 6 committee of course was put together after citizens were fed up with the fatalities on that roadway. In conjunction with local and provincial police, schools and residents, they've been instrumental in bringing awareness to the drivers of the area. Minister, what specifically will your ministry be doing to alleviate the concerns of the residents and members of this committee?

Hon Mr Palladini: The Safe on 6 committee is an excellent example of how communities and government can work. This committee has been active at every political level and suggested cost-effective improvements

on Highway 6. In fact pavement markings and speed-line warning signs and enforcement signs have already been installed and upgraded. Public reaction to my ministry's efforts has been very, very positive. A detailed design assignment is under way for construction of additional improvements, and these will be discussed further at the next meeting we're going to be holding.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance, and it requests some clarification of comments he made several days ago in the House. We were talking here about some expenditure cuts and the minister said — I think I'm quoting him here accurately — "There is absolutely no correlation between the tax cut and the expenditure cuts."

The Common Sense Revolution, though, said something quite different, as the minister will remember. The Common Sense Revolution is the Conservative campaign document, and it was very, very clear in that document that the tax cut was linked clearly to the expenditure cuts. The document says, "Balancing the budget is tied directly to every other measure in our plan," the other measures, the tax cut and the spending cuts.

Minister, what I think the people of Ontario would appreciate is confirmation from you that the document you ran on is the document the government believes in and that the tax cuts are very much tied directly to the expenditure cuts, as you said in your campaign document.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Perhaps the difference of opinion between our party and the member's party is that we actually believe on this side of the House that by reducing taxation levels in Ontario, be they payroll taxes or personal income taxes, we will actually create jobs in Ontario, which has been shown to be the case over the last year, some 99,000 more people working in the province this September than last September. I can say to the member, quite frankly we believe more people will be hired in the private sector, more jobs will be created by reducing the ever-growing burden of taxation upon hardworking, honest taxpayers and the people in the province.

Mr Phillips: I take that as a confirmation that there is a direct correlation between your tax cuts and your expenditure cuts. I will just say to the people of Ontario that you say the deficit is a big problem that must be tackled. We agree. But how you're tackling it we have a fundamental disagreement with.

You are cutting 20% of spending from hospitals in this province and closing dozens of hospitals. Virtually every classroom in this province has more students in it this year than it had a year ago. You have cut grants to municipalities by 50%, and where you are on your expenditure cuts is halfway through the cuts you say you're going to implement. This year you've announced half of your cuts and you've told us there are still as many cuts to come as you've already announced. I want you to explain to the people of Ontario —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): A question, please.

Mr Phillips: — if the deficit is that important and if we have to have these massive cuts that you insist on, how can the province afford a \$5-billion tax cut using all borrowed money —

The Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Phillips: — that means that a person earning \$150,000 a year gets a \$5,000 tax break? How can we afford that if you've got to cut hospitals, school boards, municipalities?

Hon Mr Eves: The tax cut is not costing Ontario taxpayers \$5 billion. That's point number one. Point number two, health care —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, come to order, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): He's out of control.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I'm not out of control.

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon, come to order. I'm warning you to come to order.

Mr Pouliot: He's wrong or he's lying.

1500

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon, you've crossed the line. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Pouliot: Out of respect for you and the minister, I will withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Hon Mr Eves: With respect to health care, the Minister of Health and the government have repeatedly said that we are reinvesting the money in health care, that we have protected the health care envelope. As a matter of fact, he knows that we are spending well in excess, \$200 million to \$300 million more, this year in health care than the envelope of \$17.4 billion promised. Coming from the party whose leader promised \$17 billion would be the health care envelope, that's pretty difficult to take.

Classroom sizes have not increased in the province of Ontario.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): They have so, Ernie.

Hon Mr Eves: We actually are going to devote more money to the classroom, I say to the member for Windsor-Riverside, as opposed to spending 47% of it outside the classroom. We don't think that's entirely appropriate. The reduction to municipalities — I have just as many if not more than any other member of this Legislature in my constituency — equals 2% of their total spending last year.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. We still haven't been able to get a straight answer from you with regard to the future of the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers. In addition, the leaked cabinet document which I made public last week confirms that it's your intent to disband the Occupational Disease Panel and fold it back into the WCB. You should be aware, of course, that this is now raising international outrage, given the respect that panel has had worldwide. In fact, the British magazine

Hazards carried an article that called the Ontario Occupational Disease Panel "an organization whose pronouncements on the recognition of work-related health problems are listened to and respected across the industrialized world." They go on to say, "The decision has baffled and dismayed occupational health specialists internationally who view the ODP as a model of excellence."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question.

Mr Christopherson: For years the issue of disease discovery was left inside the WCB and it did nothing for uranium workers and miners across this province. Will you avoid the international disgrace you're bringing to this province and —

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Labour.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would just like to indicate to the member opposite that we are doing everything possible to ensure that we do strengthen the commitment to health and safety in this province. Yes, there will be changes taking place, but I can give you my assurance that at the end of the day, with the changes that we make to WCB, along with the changes that we've made in the way of health and safety prevention, there will be a much greater reduction in illness and injury than was ever seen under your government for five years.

Mr Christopherson: Quite the contrary, because if you're going to remove the expert panel that's received international acclaim for the work it's done, how can you possibly be taking positive steps to eliminate occupational disease when you're in the process of killing the panel that's out in the forefront of doing this? It's not just here in Ontario and it's not just in Britain, as I've just mentioned. There's also a Dr Jeanne Beauchamp of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee who said that she was "greatly disappointed to hear from my colleagues in Canada that the province of Ontario plans to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel in the very near future." She also says, "It serves as a model for the international community on the way policy-making should be done." That's the opposite of what you're telling us.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Christopherson: Stand in your place today and tell Ontario workers that you're not going to do this to them and that you're going to keep this panel in place doing the job for workers that it has been doing for decades.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just indicate to the member opposite that I think all of your hallucinations, or whatever it is you're doing today, are quite premature. I would suggest that you wait until we introduce the amendments to the WCB reform.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I would like to take the opportunity to further respond to the question that was asked by the honourable member for Renfrew North with respect to the 102-year-old woman. I just want to assure the member —

Interjections.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): He doesn't want the answer.

Hon Mr Wilson: Well, he'll hear the answer. I'm sure he's just in the back. I have a right to do this, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It's all perfectly in order. I understand the member for Renfrew North isn't here. You may have a supplementary and anyone may respond.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm trying to do a public service here, to provide the answer in a timely manner.

The woman is 102 years old. She comes from a prestigious family, a historic family, and there's obviously been a mistake here. The mistake apparently is that the application was filled out in 1990, it wasn't signed and there were a number of boxes not checked off, so the ministry put the thing in limbo. I apologize on behalf of the ministry, because customer service should be higher. Someone should have called over the last six years and said, "By the way, this application's not complete." I assure all honourable members that we'll be getting a new application out, customer service will be made paramount in this situation and the woman in question will be reinstated into OHIP immediately.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I wrote to you in September requesting an answer to the planned destruction of child care centres and child care spaces in Toronto. You already know that Toronto is in the process of building four new schools because of increased enrolment: Eglinton, the Island Public School, Lord Dufferin Public School and Queen Victoria Public School. These schools all have present child care centres, but you refuse to fund them in these new schools. Surely you know that by refusing to fund these centres, you are destroying 218 child care spaces, yet you keep on talking, quite hypocritically, about \$600 million for child care spaces.

I'm not surprised that the people of Toronto are telling this minister she is speaking with a forked tongue. I would ask her to justify her remarks and to —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Parkdale, come to order. That is so profoundly out of order. I say to the member for Parkdale to withdraw.

Mr Ruprecht: I will withdraw that comment, but let me ask this minister a very specific question.

The Speaker: No, you have asked the question. Order. Member for Parkdale, take your seat.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you very much for the question. We have many decisions to make in terms of how we are going to allocate the \$600 million we have put aside for child care. What is happening on capital funding is certainly very much part of that discussion. There have been proposals put forward, and I look forward to continuing to provide the input before we make final decisions.

Mr Ruprecht: I've got a note right here. I'm looking at this note. In this note — and you signed it — you wrote, "My ministry will no longer provide funding for child care centres." You said: "You know where you can

go? You can go to philanthropic associations, rich corporations, and get your money there." You said, "Why don't you ask the city of Toronto school board to get you the money?" She knows that the city of Toronto school board cannot provide the funding because it is not authorized by provincial legislation.

You've been less than fair. On the one hand you're talking about \$600 million for child care spaces; on the other hand you're saying, "Go somewhere else." Which is it going to be? We want to know today, and thousands of parents in Toronto want to know today, where you stand. Are you going to use the \$600 million you're talking about today for child care spaces and centres or are you going to sit on it and do nothing about it? When are you going to act?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much for the question, sir. If I were to act in terms of making final decisions before the consultation process was complete, the honourable member would quite rightly be the first to stand up and criticize me. We are following through with putting out proposals, hearing input from groups that are interested and concerned about this, and will be making final decisions. I appreciate the concern the honourable member has. There are always many more capital needs for child care or many other things that this government has funded in the past. We are trying very much to protect funding for services to people, to protect funding for subsidies for low-income families so they can have access to supports.

1510

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 59(c), the standing committee on estimates be authorized to postpone consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Health and proceed with consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is the motion carried? Carried.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Again I have received in a Purolator pack another pile of petitions signed with regard to the Health Services Restructuring Commission's report. The petition says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by approximately 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two of Sudbury's acute care hospitals."

I affix my signature to it as I am in full agreement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can I ask the members, if you're going to meet — I appreciate there are two lobbies on either side — please go out there and meet. It's very difficult to hear the petitions. Thank you.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I agree with the petitioners and have affixed my signature to the petition.

TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise this afternoon to present a petition to install traffic lights at the corner of Myrtle Road and Highway 12 in my riding of Durham East.

"To the government of Ontario:

"Please be informed that we, the neighbours and travellers of the abovementioned area, are in full agreement that traffic lights should be installed, and we petition the Ontario government that this be done immediately, before further traffic accidents occur. Traffic is very heavy, and truck and auto speeds greatly exceed the speed limit at the best of times, but especially the early morning hours and commuting hours of 5 am to 7:30 am. Many workers commuting to the Toronto area

use Myrtle Road, known as Concession 9. It is very hazardous attempting to cross Highway 12.

"If lights were installed, the traffic on Highway 12 would have to stop periodically, giving westbound traffic in the morning and eastbound traffic in the late afternoon a much better chance to cross this section of road, hence creating a much safer condition.

"We therefore the petition the Ministry of Transportation to resolve this issue as soon as possible."

Thank you for your indulgence. I affix my name.

NURSING STAFF

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by 2,269 signatories.

"Whereas Bill 26 has empowered the health minister to make sure the hospitals preserve their high standard in patient care;

"Whereas most of the hospitals are replacing experienced registered nurses with registered practical nurses and unregulated health care workers, not only on the wards, but also in acute care areas such as operating rooms, intensive care and haemodialysis units. It is those aforementioned areas where the seriously ill patient will benefit the most from the registered nurses' skills in observation, assessment and the initiation of necessary care intervention;

"Whereas most hospitals claim the necessity to cut costs are due to cuts in funding. Yet Mount Sinai Hospital has shown on record that staffing entirely with registered nurses not only provides exemplary patient care, but also proves to be cost-effective. This is because patients recover faster with less complications, therefore a better utilization of bed spaces. Apart from that, Mount Sinai saves on the cost of training and supervision of less qualified staff;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, beseech you, the Minister of Health, to stop hospitals from replacing registered nurses with registered practical nurses and unregulated health care workers. Stop the erosion of our health care before it is too late."

I commend this worthwhile petition to the Legislative Assembly.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have a petition from people from the Sault Ste Marie and Algoma area, about 133 names all told, to do with the spring bear hunt.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I sign my name to this as well.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to rescind Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act:

"Whereas the NDP government, under former Premier Bob Rae, passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced do not track criminals; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in only one day without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the use of illegal ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I agree with this petition and therefore affix my signature to it.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition that's been forwarded to me by Susan Lundgren, who's been leading the charge in Thunder Bay for the welfare and protection of animals, and certainly we have a great deal of support, with over 500 signatures. I will read it for you.

"We, the undersigned, acknowledge the need and demand for amendments and repeals of the municipal, provincial and federal laws in relation to animal welfare and the OSPCA act. New legislation must be comprehensive, specific, all-inclusive and unerringly enforced according to standards that are conducive to appropriate animal welfare and proactive rights regulations."

I'm proud to sign my name to this.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions from the Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers' district office in Oakville, the Labourers' International Union of North America, OPSEU Local 353 and Local 354 out of Oshawa and PSAC out of Toronto. They regard this government's ongoing attack on health and

safety and WCB in this province. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I affix my signature in support of this petition.

1520

QUEEN STREET MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I keep getting petitions against the new jail that has been established in our community. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the PC government has opened a 20-bed forensic facility for the criminally insane at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre; and

"Whereas the nearby community is already home to the highest number of ex-psychiatric patients and social service organizations and hundreds of licensed and unlicensed rooming-houses, group homes and crisis care facilities in all of Canada; and

"Whereas there are existing facilities that could be expanded to assess and treat the criminally insane; and

"Whereas no one was consulted, not the local residents, not the business community, not the leaders of community organizations, not education and child care providers and not even the local member of provincial Parliament;

"We, the undersigned residents and business owners of our community, urge the PC government of Ontario and the Minister of Health to immediately stop accommodating the criminally insane in an expanded Queen Street Mental Health Centre until a full public consultation process has been completed."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I present a petition from some of my constituents and they say this:

"We, the undersigned, want you to know how we feel about your proposed health care cuts.

"Please do not misunderstand us, Mr Harris. We do not envy you your nice high income. If we had it we would be overwhelmed.

"Before you go ahead and make all your health care cuts, we would like to invite you to live as we do, below the national poverty line, for a period of five years. After five years, we would be interested to hear whether you still feel these cuts are of prime importance.

"Some of our concerns are:

"The chronic care units in our hospitals are deplorable. The nurses and staff are doing their best under difficult conditions. Mr Harris, a lot of these people, mostly seniors, helped build this country in their productive years. Now that they are sick and frail, they should be treated with respect and dignity. They should not be pushed aside and left to fend for themselves or to die.

"Specialized treatment: It is not always convenient or economical for a person to travel to another city for some treatments, when these treatments are or could be available here. We have to consider our financial positions as well.

"The renal dialysis unit is essential and should not be closed or cut back. To the patients depending on this unit, it is their lifeline. Transplants can take years to acquire. In the interim, dialysis is their only means to survival.

"Neonatal intensive care: We were shocked to hear that this unit was on the chopping block too. This service is vital to newborn babies who require 24-hour critical care treatment. Having had a grandchild that would possibly not have survived without this unit, I am appalled. When a baby is born that requires critical care, time is essential. There may not be time to transport this infant to another centre. With our northern winters, weather conditions come into the picture as well. We would hate to see an infant die because of poor weather.

"A few years ago, this community fought long and hard to upgrade this unit. Now, Mr Harris, you want to close it. Where is your head and your heart?

"Instead of all the cutbacks of essential services, have a look around. There are many other non-essential areas of concern that could be chopped. Please look. We hope you will consider some of your cuts. We would also like to thank you for taking the time to listen to this."

I sign my signature to this as well.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It is a pleasure to rise today to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness;

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic;

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary;

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require 'elective procedures' to be funded;

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion;

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the provinces exclusively to determine what services will be insured;

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is indeed hazardous to women's health;

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded 45,000 abortions in 1993, at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

It's a pleasure to affix my name to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas since March of 1996, gasoline prices have increased on average a dramatic 10 cents a litre, which is over 45 cents a gallon;

"Whereas this increase in the price of gasoline has outpaced the rate of inflation by a rate that is totally unacceptable to all consumers in this province because it is unfair and directly affects their ability to purchase other consumer goods;

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and former consumer and commercial relations minister Norm Sterling, while in opposition, expressed grave concern for gas price gouging and asked the government of the day to take action,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to eliminate gas price fixing and prevent the oil companies from gouging the public on an essential and vital product."

I affix my signature as I'm in agreement with this petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Gravelle from the standing committee on government agencies presented the committee's 21st report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Do you wish to make a statement?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): No thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Barrett from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr66, An Act respecting the City of Toronto

Bill Pr72, An Act respecting the University of St Jerome's College.

The committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr67, An Act respecting the Ontario Plumbing Inspectors Association Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à promouvoir la prévention des incendies et la sécurité publique en Ontario et modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois relatives aux services de lutte contre les incendies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you wish to make a brief statement, Minister?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The Fire Prevention and Protection Act, 1996, will allow municipalities to improve safety and reduce costs in the way they deliver fire protection and fire prevention. This bill consolidates a number of older statutes and will result in better fire protection and public fire safety education. Through this legislation, the government will ensure greater fire safety for Ontario communities.

1530

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (IMPAIRED DRIVING), 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CONDUITE AVEC FACULTÉS AFFAIBLIES)

Mrs Marland moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 85, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to Impaired Driving Offences / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les infractions pour conduite avec facultés affaiblies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Do you wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): This bill contains measures to reduce the incidence of repeat offences of impaired driving. The latest statistics from Ontario's drinking-driving countermeasures office show that of all drivers' licence suspensions issued for impaired driving, 65% were for a second or subsequent offence.

My bill requires persons convicted of impaired driving to take a prescribed education program and, if sentencing evidence deems it to be necessary, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program before their drivers' licence can be reinstated following a suspension. The convicted persons will be required to pay the cost of these education and rehabilitation programs themselves.

For many drivers such programs, combined with the existing one-year licence suspension for a first offence, will stop them from drinking and driving again. However, there are drivers for whom these are insufficient deterrents. This bill also contains measures aimed at those more resistant offenders.

The bill increases the length of the drivers' licence suspensions for repeat offences. On a second conviction of impaired driving the licence suspension will increase from two to three years; on a third conviction the suspension will increase from three to five years. Finally, for drunk drivers who are hard-core repeat offenders their drivers' licence will be permanently revoked following a fourth conviction of impaired driving. Based on legal advice, I have included a mechanism for appealing the revocation after at least five years have passed and the licence is revoked.

I look forward to debating this bill during private members' business on Thursday, October 24.

My final comment is to say that I appreciate very much the support of Mr John Bates, the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who is in the members' gallery this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker: In the future, I'd just like to advise the members that when you introduce a bill, you don't debate the bill. You just give a brief statement.

OPPOSITION DAY

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs McLeod moved opposition day motion number 2:

Whereas Mike Harris promised Ontarians in the last election that there would be "no cuts to health care funding"; and

Whereas hospital funding has been slashed by \$1.3 billion; and

Whereas the Big Blue Bulldozer, the so-called arm's-length Health Services Restructuring Commission, has begun to plough through communities across the province; and

Whereas this non-elected and unaccountable body wields dictatorial power over the fate of Ontarians' health care; and

Whereas all the work of the commission has been conducted in secret; and

Whereas this government's hospital restructuring has nothing to do with improving the quality of patient care in Ontario and everything to do with funding the Tories' 30% tax cut promise; and

Whereas decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission to date will result in Thunder Bay and Sudbury losing 50% and 37% of their acute care hospital beds respectively; and

Whereas the Common Sense Revolution promised that "local health care communities will share in any savings identified locally for reinvestment in community priorities"; and

Whereas of the \$41 million cut from the operating budgets of Thunder Bay hospitals only \$10 million has been committed to reinvestment, and of the \$41 million

cut from the operating budgets of Sudbury hospitals only \$13 million has been committed for reinvestment; and

Whereas the Minister of Health has reduced the amount the government is required to fund for capital projects from two thirds of the capital required to one half; and

Whereas thousands of Ontarians in communities across the province, such as Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kitchener, Wiarton and Kincardine, have pleaded with the minister to stop the destruction of health care in the province of Ontario and save their local hospitals; and

Whereas there is no regard for community input in the restructuring process; and

Whereas Jim Wilson has stated repeatedly that "bricks and mortar do not cure people, people cure people"; and

Whereas the \$1.3-billion cut to hospital funding over three years will result in 15,000 nurses losing their jobs; and

Whereas this loss of health care providers translates into patients losing 13 million hours of nursing care; and

Whereas the actions of the Harris government will result in the erosion of quality and accessible health care in the province of Ontario; and

Whereas Ontarians are frightened and angry that because of the actions of the Harris Conservatives they will be unable to access quality health care in their own communities; and

Whereas the Minister of Health is clearly in control of this process despite his attempts to deny it;

Therefore, this House calls on the Mike Harris government to admit that the so-called arm's-length restructuring commission is a sham; to dismantle the unaccountable and dictatorial Health Services Restructuring Commission; to restore the \$1.3 billion it has stripped from Ontario's hospitals; and to live up to the promise it made to voters in the last election that access to quality health care will be protected.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): You will appreciate the fact that it is going to be difficult to restrict the debate on this motion to the two hours we have remaining to us this afternoon. There are a number of my caucus colleagues who are anxious to participate, so I'm going to attempt in leading off this debate to speak fairly briefly, although I am personally feeling so much frustration, so much concern and so much very real anger after the stripping of the hospital budgets and after what the hospital restructuring commission has done in my home community of Thunder Bay and in my colleague's community of Sudbury, and what the commission will do in communities across this province, that it is going to be difficult to curtail what I want to say this afternoon.

I know my colleagues are anxious to speak. I know they are anxious to speak because they are already seeing in their communities the impact of the cuts to the hospital budgets. They're seeing the layoff of nurses. My colleague from Hamilton mentioned the fact in the House the other day that 2,000 nurses were going to face layoffs in the Hamilton area. I know they're concerned about the loss of health care in their communities and I know they realize that the same restructuring commission which has already come to Thunder Bay and Sudbury is on its way to their communities. They've seen what's happened in

Thunder Bay and they've seen what's happened in Sudbury, and they are worried that the same thing is going to happen in their communities. They have reason to be worried, so they are anxious to speak to this issue today.

There is so much that has been happening in health care in this province in recent weeks and months that it's difficult to even touch on it in a single resolution, as lengthy as that resolution may have appeared to be. The resolution we've presented today doesn't begin to touch on what is happening in the whole area of mental health, where there are changes in governance that have been proposed by the restructuring commission, directions that violate the ministry's own directions, that set aside any principle of independent governance for mental health, directions put in place by the commission that, in my view, threaten to put mental health so far on the back burner that all the needs in the area of mental health are just going to keep boiling over on to the streets of our communities with no one left clearly responsible for addressing them. That's a concern, but it's a debate that will have to wait for another day.

The resolution we've presented today doesn't get into the issue of long-term care, care for our seniors, where the flat-line budget that the minister likes to brag about is proving totally, completely inadequate to meet the needs of a population that is aging in every way — aging in the sense that our seniors are a growing percentage of our population, aging in the sense that our seniors are living longer and certainly aging in the sense that our seniors are encountering care needs that require more and not less care. They need institutional care as an option, not instead of community-based care but as accessible, alternative, optional care for those for whom supportive care at home is just no longer an option. We are a long way from the days when half the people who were in our nursing homes did not need to be there. But that, again, is a debate for another day.

Today in our resolution we focus on two very much related issues. The first is the work of a commission that has been given the power to tell a community what health care it can have and what health care it cannot have. The second concern is the responsibility of a government that is taking millions of dollars out of health care in our communities to pay for a tax cut, a government that takes \$1.3 billion out of the budgets of hospitals across this province and then tries to say, as the Minister of Health says repeatedly in this place: "We are not responsible for shutting down hospitals. It is an independent commission, an arm's-length commission that is making these kinds of decisions."

1540

We begin this debate by making two things absolutely clear. The first is that it is the Conservative government of Mike Harris and Jim Wilson that set up the commission in law. It is the government that appoints the commissioners, it is the government that provides staff to the commission, it is the government that receives advice from the commission and indeed, as we have seen, it is the government that provides advice to the commission — advice, as we have seen in Thunder Bay, that supports the closure of our hospital beds and the closure of our hospitals; advice in Toronto that says we should

close four more hospitals than the 11 the district health council had already recommended closing. Make no doubt that this commission is not at arm's length from the government that sets it up, staffs it and advises it.

The second point is that it is this government, and this government alone, that sets the budgets for hospitals and for health care. It is this government that gives hospitals money. It is this government that takes the money away. The commission which has supposedly been given independent powers has only been given power to advise the minister when it comes to the funding. It is the government that is directly and solely responsible for hospital budgets, it is the government that has set up this so-called independent commission to give it advice and it is the government that is ultimately responsible for the provision of health care in our communities. It cannot walk away from that responsibility, as much as Jim Wilson, the Minister of Health, would like to do just that.

I am actually not sure whether Jim Wilson, our Minister of Health, really thought he could avoid responsibility by setting up a commission and giving it powers that have never been given to a so-called independent, non-elected body before. I'm not sure if Jim Wilson realized how dictatorial the exercise of absolute power in the hands of a non-accountable body could be and would be. I'm not sure if he realized how quickly his commission, having been asked not only to do his dirty work but to do it as quickly as possible, would become a monster. I'm not sure if he recognized that a commission with the power to dictate terms but no power at all to pay the costs of his restructuring could only be a rigid and unresponsive demolition squad for the Harris government, and that's what it has proven to be.

I think the Minister of Health was simply desperate. He was desperate to find the ways to cut the \$1.3 billion from the hospital budget in time to meet the Minister of Finance's budget targets and in time for the Premier to deliver his tax cut. He was desperate, his government was desperate and his government is still desperate, so the commission has quickly become an out-of-control body marching into our communities, marching out again and leaving only destruction in its wake.

I can tell you, having been part of a community that has been visited by the commission, that the commission's work has absolutely nothing to do with a thoughtful and planned restructuring of health care, as much as the minister likes to talk about that. It is certainly not contributing to the creation of what many people like to describe as the ultimate goal of health care restructuring, and that is a seamless, integrated system. Even the head of the commission talks about that as a vision, the commissioners talk about that, but with the commissioners, and indeed with the Minister of Health, that is nothing but jargon. It is convenient jargon to attempt to camouflage what they are actually doing in our communities today as we speak.

The commission can talk about vision, but it's some sort of dreamlike ideal, an ideal that somewhere down the road you would like to see happen, something that will be talked about in the future. It is not something the commission can deal with today, because the commission has been given only one mandate. The commission has not been given the mandate to create a seamless, integrated

system or to put money back into communities. The commission has been given the mandate to destroy, to level the hospitals we have in place now, to strip away their budgets to meet the minister's \$1.3-billion goal. They have not been given the mandate to put money back into our communities. The commission has absolutely no power to do that. It's clear that the government is not prepared to do it and it has given the commission those marching orders. All you have to do is look at the evidence of the two communities the commission has visited to date.

In Thunder Bay, \$41 million a year being taken out of health care in our community and \$10 million being reinvested; the net loss to health care to the citizens in Thunder Bay is \$31 million a year that Thunder Bay residents are expected to contribute to the government's coffers to pay for the tax break being given to our wealthiest citizens.

In Sudbury, \$41 million a year being stripped away from hospital budgets, \$13 million being reinvested; the net loss there, \$28 million from the health care access needed by the residents of Sudbury.

I can tell the members who are present, I can tell people in communities across this province that this commission is not coming into your community to work with the health care providers and hospital board members and concerned citizens in your communities to design a health care system that works for your community. That is not their mandate; it is not their goal; it is not their approach. This commission is just to go out there and get the job of levelling done and get the dollars out.

We refer to it as a bulldozer, but I think actually that is not the most appropriate term. If I could rewrite the resolution now, I would change the term because the commission is really more like an armoured tank, and the reason it's more like an armoured tank is because the gunners of this commission are locked inside so that no flak can get them, so the tank can just roll over our hospitals and our hospital boards and our community planning and the people in our communities who care about health care in their communities.

Two thousand people worried in Wiarton? That's not the commission's concern. Three thousand people in Kincardine who are saying, "We want to keep our hospital open"? The commission sees this as an emotional reaction of people who are not prepared to be reasonable, people who are just resistant to change. This commission meets only behind closed doors. The commissioners meet only with those they invite to meet with them. They never bring people together in one place to discuss different perceptions of what is needed, let alone to do any real community planning. No one knows what anybody else has said to the commission and no one knows who the commission actually listens to. That's the way they work, folks, and that's the way they'll work when they hit your town.

At least we in the opposition managed to get a 30-day appeal period because of our fight over Bill 26, the bill that established this commission. It was never the intention to have any appeal period for a community at all. The commission was to come in, do its work, get out and no appeal whatsoever. We managed to get a 30-day appeal period. But let me tell you, you should not be

under any illusions that the commission wants this and they certainly don't consider it to be a public appeal period. They will receive only what they describe as logical arguments, but they don't pay any attention to arguments that don't actually fit the predetermined logic of the commissioners themselves. They certainly do not want to hear community concerns. They don't want to hear people concerns because those are emotional, they're just not logical.

I can tell you that the commission's logic is all about dollars and bottom lines and statistical formulas, and it's all supposed to be so objective, so logical, that no reasonable person should complain when their hospital gets closed and their community loses half its hospital beds. So don't tell the commission that in Thunder Bay, in my home community, you can't even see an orthopaedic surgeon until May 1998, let alone get surgery for your hip replacement; don't tell the commission that your mother waited on the stretcher in the hallway of the emergency room for hours because there was no hospital bed; don't tell the commission that your spouse would have died when he had his heart attack if the hospital had been any further away, as in fact was the testimony of the Conservative member for Kitchener, because all of that's emotional, none of that is logical.

The commission's formula says you need half the beds you have now. The statistical formulas are the only logic this commission listens to — patient-days per 1,000 — and if you don't fit, well then somebody just better learn to be more efficient. And closing your hospital and shutting down your hospital beds is the way to force you to do that.

Don't try and tell Jim Wilson and Mike Harris that hospital budget cuts are forcing bed closures and the layoff of nurses, as many as 15,000 and maybe twice that number, over the next three years, because their answer to that is to say, "We'll let the commission come in and we'll close down whole hospitals." You've heard the Minister of Health say that, "We won't just shut down hospital beds, we'll close the hospital, and then you won't notice the hospital beds have been shut down."

Jim Wilson assures us, "Don't worry about the layoff of 15,000 nurses because bricks and mortar don't cure people; people do." The fact that 15,000 nurses will lose their jobs as our hospitals are closed down shouldn't bother us, because somehow still there are going to be people, quite apart from the bricks and mortar, who will cure others. If those people happen to be cafeteria workers with a two-week crash course behind them instead of those trained nurses, well, that's the hospital's decision, it's not a decision the government is responsible for.

1550

They would not interfere with hospital boards unless in fact they come in, take them over and shut them down. No one wants the government to interfere. What we want them to do is to stop stripping hospital budgets and stop starving our hospitals, literally, to death.

I know there are some — I understand at least one or two on the commission — who live in such an abstract, theoretical world that they believe some day we won't need hospitals at all, that community care will meet all the needs. I am a strong supporter of community-based

care, but I don't believe we're ever going to be doing hip replacements or liver transplants at home. I am a very strong believer in community planning and in putting in place a health care delivery system that meets the unique needs of a community. For me, that's what community-based care is really all about.

In my community we want to know that we can provide hospital-based health care in northwestern Ontario without having to put people on a plane and ship them to Toronto. I have to ask you whether or not people know what it means to be sick and alone in a hospital in Toronto, 1,000 miles away from the home with which you're familiar, and in most cases 1,000 miles away from your family. I wonder if people know how it bankrupts families in my home community of Thunder Bay who try to pay the living expenses so that a family member can come down and be near. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that's something we want to avoid as much as possible. That's what we need in our community: hospital-based care at home.

I know that different communities are going to have different needs and they're going to have different priorities. Up in Pickle Lake, they want to make sure they can get emergency care, they want to make sure they can get basic care, and they also want to make sure that if they do have to come down to a regional hospital in Thunder Bay to get their hospital care, to get kidney dialysis treatment or to get surgery, they're going to be given enough days in hospital to fully recuperate from the kind of surgery they need or to fully complete their kidney dialysis treatments. They don't want to be sent home a day later, because home for them is not a few blocks away where they can get back quickly if there's a problem; home for them is hundreds of miles away. But distance from home for patients referred into a centre like Thunder Bay was not considered, and I quote, "a statistically significant factor" when the commission applied its formula to determine how many beds Thunder Bay's regional hospital would need.

The formula this commission is using is described as aggressive. They say it represents a level of efficiency that 25% of hospitals are achieving. We're trying to find out exactly which hospitals are achieving the target and why. I know for one that Lake Nipigon hospital near us in Thunder Bay is in the top 25%, and more power to them, but they will admit that it's a whole lot easier to have less than 580 patient-days per 1,000 when you refer all your really sick patients to Thunder Bay, because that's the way hospital care is supposed to work in northwestern Ontario.

The bottom line for people in every community from Toronto to Hamilton to Ottawa to Toronto to Kitchener to Chatham is that the commission is coming and they are going to shut down hospital beds in your community, because you're not going to meet their target otherwise. That's going to mean more layoffs of nurses and it is going to mean less care. It may mean you have to go a lot farther to get emergency care, but you shouldn't worry about that because in the commission's view that won't be a statistically significant further distance. You'll undoubtedly have to wait longer for your hip replacement, but that shouldn't matter because if your situation becomes really critical, you can bump someone who's

been waiting longer but who's not quite on the crisis list yet.

I don't believe this is the kind of health care we've come to expect in this province, and I don't believe it's the kind of health care we have a right to expect still.

Are there challenges in meeting new needs in health care with limited budget dollars? Of course there are. Do we have to change to find new ways of meeting the needs? Yes, we do. But it should not start with a \$1.3-billion cut to hospital budgets. It is inexcusable to add to the difficulties of providing hospital care by taking more than \$1 billion out for a tax cut. If the government wasn't so desperate to find its \$5 billion for its tax cut, there would be money for reinvestment in emerging areas of health care from other areas of saving. Everyone agrees that money should be reinvested in health care and education, but the money for that reinvestment should not be found by stripping it away from our hospitals, and communities should not be expected to pay for the cost of the government's stripping decisions.

It is amazing that a government can force a community to shut down its hospitals, lose half its hospital beds, contribute \$31 million a year to the government's coffers to pay for the government's tax cut and then be told to go out and raise \$45 million to pay for these decisions imposed on them. Yet that is exactly what Thunder Bay has been told. It is not only bizarre, it is absolutely unfair. It is like a tax imposed on our community and it is a tax that is completely unrelated to our community's ability to pay. It is certainly not a tax we have chosen to pay, because any choice our community might have had has been stripped away along with the \$31 million that's being taken out of our community.

The commission that has been set up to do the dirty work for this government must be shut down. It is unaccountable, it is unresponsive and its conclusions are creating chaos and divisiveness and destruction in every community it visits. The Harris government must stop trying to avoid responsibility for what's happening. They hold the purse strings that are driving this whole thing. They are the elected government responsible for ensuring that we get the health care we need in our communities. They cannot avoid that responsibility, and they are totally responsible for the devastation that their commission is bringing to our communities.

The Harris government must stop the cuts. It must shut down the Sherman tank that is devastating our hospitals and it must start working with communities to put realistic, logical, locally responsive plans in place to protect the health care that we all value so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I wish to pay tribute to the leader of the official opposition for bringing forth this resolution this afternoon. It is an important one and there is —

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: — an assembly that's not concerned about what's going on in health care in this province.

I must say that there are a lot of people who I believe voted Tory in the last election, voted Conservative, because they felt a number of things: One, they felt that a tax break would be nice for a change since taxes have

been going up; they felt that the Tories were going to cut expenditures in an appropriate way in the province, and the reason I say "appropriate" is because they promised that's exactly what they would do; and the centrepiece of what they were going to protect in the social fabric of this province was health care. They made no mistake about it: They were going to protect the health care system in this province. Not a nickel would be cut from health care, said the Premier. Well, the Premier has made a lot of promises, including such things as no user fees.

Well, I'll be very careful, Mr Speaker, in the language I use because I don't want you to have to make a difficult decision and throw me out of this place. But I want to tell you that there's a —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Don't play with the truth.

Mr Laughren: "Don't play with the truth," says the member from Ottawa. Well, isn't that a nice thing for a Tory backbencher to imply, that I shouldn't play with the truth when I'm talking about the Premier's promises that have since been broken. That's a very nice turn of phrase that the member has, and the member is from Ottawa. Which riding?

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Laughren: The member for Ottawa-Rideau is implying that perhaps I shouldn't play with the truth.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The judge.

Mr Laughren: Who said "judge"?

Mr Bradley: He's a judge.

Mr Laughren: He is a judge or was a judge?

Mr Bradley: Was a judge.

Mr Laughren: Well, we'll debate that some day too.

Mr Cooke: So the Tory election did the justice system some good.

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: Mr Speaker, I know you'll protect me as a member from a small third party in this assembly from the horrible hordes on the other side. But I mean it quite seriously when I say that I believe those were the reasons why the Tories got elected as a government in the majority they did in June 1995.

If the Tories had said, "We're going to do the following things but, by the way, we're going to close the hospitals in Thunder Bay, close the hospitals in Sudbury, close the hospitals in Ottawa," do you think for a minute you would have got elected on June 8, 1995? Not a chance. If you had told the people the truth on June 8, 1995, you'd still be sitting over here. That's what you'd be doing.

1600

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: No, no, never mind. You know better than that. Mr Speaker, you're not protecting me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ed Doyle): Order.

Mr Laughren: Thank you. I would simply ask the Tory members to do — they're big fans of polling. Do the polling out there and ask the people what they think about the way you're treating the health care system. Go and ask them. You don't mind polling on other things. Why don't you poll on the way you're treating the health care system in this province?

You have broken your fundamental promise to the people of this province and you would not have got elected if you'd told the truth in the election campaign in 1995. You would not have been elected as a government, I can tell you that. I'm absolutely certain of that and you know it in your heart of hearts; you know it. That's why there's a mini-rebellion in the Tory back bench against the cabinet. That's why. It may only be one of the reasons, but it's one of the reasons why you're unhappy with your Premier and with the cabinet.

It's plainly evident that's what's happening. We know why Mr Stockwell got elected as Speaker; we know why Richard Johnston wasn't appointed to that education committee: because the Tory back bench said, "We've had enough of you telling us what we're going to do and we don't care if we're 44% in the polls. We're taking charge on these following decisions," and that's what you've done. I think it's because you're starting to get heat back at home. You're starting to feel the heat back home. Anyway, I don't want to digress.

I can tell you that one of the reasons, and I don't want to repeat what the leader of the official opposition said about the Health Care Restructuring Commission, but I don't think I've ever seen a government lacking in such courage that they'd appoint an independent commission to make political decisions in this province. That's what you've done. If you think that you can hide behind that commission and not wear its recommendations and what is implemented, you're sadly mistaken. The people in this province will not be conned by that smokescreen of the commission. They know who's pulling the strings; they know who's making the decisions on health care in the province. It's you people, it's the Tory caucus and cabinet that's making those decisions.

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): You did that.

Mr Laughren: The member says that we appointed a commission to look into hospital restructuring. That's absolutely correct. I'll give you an example.

Interjections.

Mr Laughren: Mr Speaker, the Tories are a little sensitive about this whole issue of health care.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Laughren: Mr Speaker, you protect me for a minute and then you forget about protecting me. I would ask for your support here, as I try and conduct this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Let the gentleman speak.

Mr Laughren: Thank you.

I can recall when we were talking about health care restructuring in Sudbury. The Tory candidates in the Sudbury area said, "We insist on keeping all the hospitals open and reinvesting any savings in our community." Now guess what's happened?

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): They still do.

Mr Laughren: What do they think about you now? What do you think they feel about their government now? What do you think the Tories in Sudbury, the Tories in Thunder Bay and the Tories in Ottawa and in Toronto will think when you implement the recommendations of this commission? Your name's going to be mud.

I can recall they held our feet to the fire when it came to reinvesting any savings in the local community. They held our feet to the fire, those folks over there. We made a commitment that if there were any savings on the hospital restructuring, we would reinvest those savings in the community, in community-based care. Guess what? Do you think this government's doing that? The commission is recommending that, but guess what? Talk about having your cake and eating it too. The government says what the commission recommends on the closing of hospitals is final and binding, and that's it; that's a final decision. However, "Any recommendations they might make on reinvesting in the community, that's up to us as a government." So what have you got? You've got the commission making the hard, tough decisions and the government saying, "That's binding," and then when it comes to reinvesting the savings realized to the community, the government, the Minister of Health is keeping that decision to himself.

Now you talk about a government lacking in courage. That's what the story is here. You don't have the courage to make the tough decisions. All you did was set up the commission and say, "Go out and make the tough decisions and we'll pretend that's not us, that's the commission, that's an independent commission." It just happens to be stacked with Tories, but it's an independent commission.

The world's not buying that line, I can tell you. Go to any of the communities that have been affected. Go to Sudbury and natter up there the way you're nattering in here. Go to Thunder Bay and say what you're saying down here. In the future, go to Ottawa and come to Toronto and say it as well, because you know that people are going to hold you to your promise and you've broken that promise. You've broken faith with the people of this province because of your promise that you will not touch a nickel of health care spending. In Thunder Bay the recommendations of the commission will be a 38% reduction over current hospital expenditures and in Sudbury about a 25% reduction and the minister will not promise to retain those savings in the community.

Also, the capital costs: In Sudbury, for example, to move from three acute care hospitals to one means that there'll be about \$80 million required in transition and capital costs — \$80 million. The current formula for capital is, I believe, 50-50: 50 in the community and 50 to the province. It used to be two thirds to the province and one third to community. This government has changed that, but they'd say, of course, that's not cutting health care. They are, once again.

The minister's not made a commitment to putting that kind of money to make the transition happen seamlessly. He has not made that commitment. I personally have no problem with hospital restructuring and with one hospital in Sudbury. I don't care, as the minister says, if the bricks and mortar are not what delivers the services. I don't disagree with that in principle.

If there is one hospital governance, I support that. I have no problem with one hospital governance. However, once again, the Minister of Health had promised the Catholic community in this province that he would honour Catholic governance in the hospitals of this

province. That's what he promised. He promised them that. And now, because the commission has said that's not —

Mr Cooke: He specifically wrote that in Sudbury.

Mr Laughren: He wrote a letter — ask him — and said he would honour Catholic governance at hospitals in the province. He's broken that promise as well because the commission has said there will be one hospital board in Sudbury —

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): People knew who broke their promise when they elected us.

Mr Laughren: Well, they sure know who broke the promise when they elected the Tories and especially when you're dealing with health care.

So the Minister of Health has broken yet another promise. Ask him; he said they would honour the Catholic governance of hospitals. He hasn't done that. That's a binding recommendation of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, a binding one, so he can't alter that now. He set it up himself and said, "It'll be a binding decision," and that's what it is. So guess what? That's another promise that's been broken.

When you talk about the public sector in northern Ontario, you talk about a commitment that's been made by a number of governments over a number of years to the north. The public sector is what has kept economic activity at the level it's been at in northern Ontario. If you take away the major role the public sector plays in northern Ontario, you are dealing a severe body blow to the economy of the north.

I know that Tories like to think the private sector does everything. But I invite you to check what's happened to Sudbury in the last 20 years, which includes Tory governments. Ask them what has happened to economic activity in Sudbury in the last 20 years and who has created the jobs through a building up of the health care sector, the educational sector, Science North — it goes on and on. Major commitments by the public sector have kept the economy of Sudbury alive when the private sector was cutting back very dramatically.

Of course, when I look at the years gone by and the way this government treats the doctors of this province — and I guess I should wind up my remarks.

1610

Mr Cooke: You've still got at least five minutes.

Mr Laughren: The last three parliaments have had three different majority governments. There was the Liberals, there was us and then now there's you. I believe that the only government that didn't have the doctors withdrawing services was the New Democratic government, the only one, and guess what? When we were dealing with the doctors, guess who was hammering us in the Legislature day after day. Nobody other than slick Jim Wilson. Jim Wilson was hammering us about our treatment of the doctors. Well, well, isn't that strange? Now you get in charge, and guess what? Guess who's withdrawing services. The doctors of this province are withdrawing services. Let's face it. I sat at a meeting with OMA officials —

Mr Preston: Your Premier —

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Laughren: That's nonsense. Let me tell you something. I sat at a meeting with some Ontario Medical

Association officials, and they said to me, "Well, you know doctors did vote Conservative in the last election." I said, "No, don't tell me that the doctors voted Tory in the last election." You want to talk about a profession that feels betrayed. You talk about the doctors in this province.

We worked out a deal. We're not the ones who wrestled the doctors to the ceiling when it came to their level of benefits; it was the Tories and Larry Grossman that wrestled the doctors to the ceiling. Not us, not us. It was the Tories. We put a cap of \$3.8 billion on billings for doctors, and we said it would be a utilization component that would allow it to go up to, I believe, \$4.1 billion this year. Now you said —

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: No, no, \$3.8 billion. That's it. And you wonder why the doctors are angry at you. You have bungled. You have bungled the entire health care system, but in particular, dealings with the doctors. Because you know what? The doctors started out being very friendly to you. I can remember them coming out of a meeting with the Minister of Health and saying, "This is a government that we can work with." Go and ask them now what they think of the Tory government and their treatment of doctors, professionals in this province.

I listen to the comments from the Minister of Health about drawing lines in the sand, threatening the College of Physicians and Surgeons. You have not treated the professions in this province very well. They understand that, and I think it's time people started holding you people accountable for what you're doing to the health care system, and I think you will find an increasing feeling around the province, back in your own area, that, "Wait a minute, this isn't what we were promised after all." You really have let people down on what you said you would do in the handling of the health care system.

I can tell you, as someone who comes from the Sudbury area, who started out feeling very supportive of health care restructuring, very supportive, because I had said right from the beginning, "We need sole governance of the hospital system in Sudbury, and if we can sort out the need for beds and if we can sort out the delivery of community-based services in the province, then I will continue to support hospital restructuring in the province," I said that from the beginning. But when I saw the way the Health Services Restructuring Commission worked — they came into town, they held hearings, by invitation only, and then they brought down their report, which is binding, and they said, "Now you've got 30 days to respond, but you can only respond in the following way," certain criteria. That's not the way you run a health care system and reform a health care system in this province. That is arbitrary beyond belief. People have 30 days to respond and then they'll come down with their final report just as they did in Thunder Bay.

All I can tell you folks is that you have taken on a fight with people who care more about health care than any other aspect of the social fabric in this province, and you've taken on a fight with the medical profession of this province that was completely unnecessary. You provoked it and you're going to live with the fallout from that. I would venture to guess that the people in this province will say to you increasingly back in your

ridings, back in your constituencies, that you misled them and that you did not keep your faith with them because of the promise you made in the election campaign in 1995 and the way in which you're delivering now, because you have broken faith with the people of this province when it comes to the delivery of health care.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I must admit I'm somewhat surprised that the Liberals have put this motion forward. In the first line it states, "Whereas Mike Harris promised Ontarians in the last election that there would be 'no cuts to health care funding,'" and we have lived up to that promise. What the Liberals fail to say —

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Please, Helen.

Mrs Johns: We're not going to start again, are we, where you talk over me the whole time? I'm not prepared to have it happen today.

The Acting Speaker: Please, let's have some order.

Mrs Johns: What the Liberals fail to say is that if they had been elected, the health care budget would have been cut to \$17 billion, less than the \$17.4 billion that we have committed to spending each year. With this year's health care budget at \$17.7 billion, once again a promise kept by this government, we have exceeded our commitment by some \$300 million and exceeded the Liberal commitment by \$700 million.

It would be a much different debate if they had been elected. We wouldn't be talking about restructuring; we would be talking about a lack of service, a lack of vision. We have heard many criticisms from the Liberals, yet we have heard no solutions.

The NDP, the Liberals and Conservatives all know that health care decisions are difficult decisions, very difficult problems. The Liberals would have us believe that restructuring will not increase the quality of care. We have heard over and over again that restructuring is necessary. Both the OHA and the ONA are in agreement that restructuring is necessary to ensure a high-quality patient care is available at the end of the day.

David Martin of the Ontario Hospital Association, in a speech to the Empire Club of Canada earlier this year, stated: "Some look at our system and see how much has been accomplished in terms of restructuring in the past few years. I look at it, and I see how much more" needs to be accomplished.

Listen to this quote: "Nurses want to create a seamless system of health and health-related social services that provides high-quality, appropriate, consumer-oriented, outcomes-based and cost-effective services within flexible, locally created system structures designed to meet each community's unique needs and improve the health status of the population served."

Those words were spoken by the Ontario Nurses' Association in their vision document that was recently released, but they could easily have been spoken by Health Minister Jim Wilson. In his speech to the Empire Club earlier this year he said, "Our new direction for health care will result in seamless and accountable care for Ontarians, integrating assessment, treatment, care, illness prevention and health promotion."

The Liberals would have you look at this situation and say that the status quo is acceptable. Under previous

governments, including the Liberals, approximately 8,400 hospital beds were closed. That's the equivalent of 33 mid-sized hospitals. We're still paying the heat and hydro for these empty wings in buildings. High administrative costs are not allowing dollars to flow directly to patient care.

This government has taken the politics out of health care. This is widely recognized as an impediment to restructuring. We appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission to ensure that all aspects of health care in the region are taken into account before they make their recommendations. Closing hospitals is very difficult and very emotional. As the past has shown, if the decision to close hospitals had to come from politicians, they would never close.

1620

The Liberals have stated that this commission is dictatorial and unacceptable and that the commission will do nothing to improve the quality of care in Ontario. We have chosen some of the most respected people in the health care field to make these difficult decisions. The Leader of the Opposition says that she doesn't value their opinion. She thinks she's as capable of making this decision.

I'd like to tell you something about the people who have been appointed to the commission: Duncan Sinclair, the former dean of medicine at Queen's University, I would say a highly qualified individual; Shelly Jamieson, executive director of the Ontario Nursing Home Association; Mark Rochon, former president and CEO of the Humber Memorial Hospital in Etobicoke. The list of qualifications goes on and on. These people are incredibly qualified. They have a wide range of experience and they have the best interests of Ontario at heart.

As David Naylor, the head of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Ontario and special adviser to the restructuring commission, has said: "The winners must be our fellow citizens, both as patients and taxpayers. If action isn't quick, the losers will be the next generation."

The NDP spent \$26 million in getting the restructuring report project started but they had no plan to implement the studies once they were completed. When we came to office, these studies started landing on the minister's desk. Were they just supposed to be shelved, as a lot of other reports had been in the past? Should we have ignored the advice of local volunteers who worked very hard over the course of a number of months to prepare these studies based on what they believe are their local needs? I don't think so. I think it's imperative that we act on these reports. I think it's important to look at the process now, because we've been talking about the process today, to see if the process that's involved with the restructuring commission is working well.

The restructuring commission is mandated by the law to have regard to these reports that are completed by district health councils. As you know, DHC reports are only prepared after many months of public consultation. The government often receives dissenting reports. The commission, after reviewing the reports and after talking to people in the community, listening to the issues, issues a set of recommendations regarding the restructuring of local services that it feels are necessary. These recommendations pertain to the closure or creation of facilities,

the need for reinvestments and anything else related to the local delivery of health care services the commission deems necessary to make comment on which will improve the quality of health care.

There is a 30-day period during which any members of the community or any organization, including the affected hospitals, can forward their comments and their recommendations to the commission for consideration. After this 30-day period the commission considers all the feedback it received on its initial recommendations and issues its final directives.

The opposition parties are asking that all dollars saved from restructuring be reinvested in the community on a dollar-for-dollar basis. I'd like to read to you the following quote:

"Let me address the critical matter of what happens to the savings achieved in hospital reconfiguration.... If the savings from your system reconfiguration exceed the needs identified in your community-based plan, that is, if your savings compound to the extent that Windsor has an integrated spectrum of community-based services and still has savings over and above its planned needs, of course the taxpayers of Ontario will then also get a return on their investment in Windsor, to be used to reinvest in other communities who are far behind."

This is a quote from the Minister of Health, not Jim Wilson but rather Ruth Grier, the former NDP Minister of Health. They had every intention, as NDPs, of reinvesting the dollars where they were needed most in Ontario and they stand here sanctimoniously today and tell us they would put them someplace else.

If our goal is to create a truly province-wide system with a seamless continuum of care across the communities, then all communities must be able to share in the savings found in our communities. As Mr Martin said: "We cannot just shrink the system. It must change substantially. Fortunately, that change is under way."

I believe it is important to note that the Big Blue Bulldozer the Liberals are speaking about is about to clear a path to excellent quality health care in Ontario, something that everyone in this House hopes for and that we as the government will be implementing.

I would like to use the last few minutes of my time to address the issue of why restructuring is necessary. We will hear arguments from the opposite side of the House about why the status quo is acceptable. Well, it just isn't. The process is necessary in order to ensure high-quality patient care is available to the people of Ontario at the end of the day.

Ontario is one of the last provinces to undergo hospital restructuring. In Saskatchewan, the NDP government has closed approximately half of the hospitals. In Manitoba, there has been no evidence of reduction in services with bed closures. In fact, Winnipeg residents had relatively the same or better access to hospitals in 1993 as they did in the years preceding. In fact, there were more patients cared for in the Winnipeg hospitals in 1993 than there were in 1990 or 1989, despite considerable reductions to bed numbers and expenditures.

In fact, the number of days patients spent in the hospital decreased. The days per 1,000 residents dropped by 9%. There was also no noticeable decrease in access to hospitals for paediatric patients, non-Winnipeg patients

or patients from the poorest neighbourhoods. Comparing 1993 back through to 1990, surgical procedures were actually up from where they were before the restructuring. Mortality rates among those admitted for heart attack, cancer surgery or hip fractures remained low. Even among the elderly, the most vulnerable group of patients, no increases in mortality occurred.

To date, we have made a number of reinvestments to ensure the community services are in place before hospitals are closed, and we are doing this before seeing the money from hospital restructuring. The member opposite wanted to talk about long-term care in our reinvestments. We have reinvested our largest investments in long-term care and it yet to be taken up by all the areas in Ontario. My colleagues are going to outline many of the reinvestments we have done so far, so I'm not going to get into that discussion right now.

This morning I was proud to be at the announcement made by the Premier and the Minister of Health that \$24.3 million will be used to establish 30 Ontario breast screening programs over the next four years. This is a substantial reinvestment that will protect the lives of many women throughout Ontario. This reinvestment would not have been possible without restructuring.

As important, we need these reinvestments not only for the patient but also for the families of the patients. I know when my mother needed heart surgery I didn't understand why she had to wait. She needed it; she should get it within a reasonable amount of time. It created anxiety for my family. The ultimate goal needs to be to reduce waiting lists so that patients and loved ones don't have to add to their stress in these very unfortunate circumstances.

I also have a situation in my riding where a community group would like to purchase dialysis equipment to service constituents so they won't need to travel the long distances to London three times per week for dialysis. They are currently prevented from making this capital purchase because the hospitals do not have the funds in their budgets for the leasehold improvements to install and operate the machines and to provide trained staff.

If the equipment was installed, it would be beneficial to many groups. It would be beneficial, for example, to the patients who wouldn't have to travel and would have good-quality health care. It would be beneficial to the taxpayers for they wouldn't have to make this capital investment. It would be beneficial to the hospitals because they wouldn't have to schedule the dialysis treatments for their constituents, and therefore it would free up resources for other patients.

For the opposition to argue that restructuring is not necessary, I say, tell it to the people of Huron who are waiting for restructuring, who need to have restructuring to obtain the services they need in their community. I would argue that the time has come for the opposition in Ontario to stop fearmongering and work with us to create an even better system than we have right now for health care.

1630

Mrs Pupatello: I'm indeed pleased to be able to speak now, and especially after we've heard from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health. If there's one thing I've learned since I've been in the House in these

few short months, it is that if there's one group you can't trust with health care, it's the Conservatives and the Conservative government. You can't trust the Tories on health care.

The parliamentary assistant can stand in the House today and talk about fearmongering. Let me tell you about some real-life examples that the PA is well aware of, and that is pregnant women in my community who do not have prenatal care, who do not have access to doctors. Let me tell you about 40,000 people in the county of Essex who do not have a family doctor. Is that fearmongering? Certainly not on the part of opposition members, but certainly on the part of families who are in need of care.

Let me tell you too, for anybody who might be watching, what's really behind the massive cuts to the health care system in Ontario, and that is, very simply, looking for billions of dollars to fund a tax cut.

The most surprised I've been is to find that the health minister was the health critic for five years before he became the minister. He knew what the issues were, yet he took on the mantle as Minister of Health knowing full well what the issues were in underserved areas like mine. He knew that making the kinds of changes that may well fit into the Metro scenario simply doesn't work outside of teaching centres. All of the members in this House who do not happen to live in the Kingston area, the Toronto area or the London area have doctor shortages. They all have services that are not adequate to support the medical people who are in those communities. When you apply a cookie-cutter solution to my community, we feel it even more.

We've been plying the minister with requests to resolve the issue, in particular for women who are at risk in their pregnancies. We have OHIP wrangling with American hospitals as some kind of alternative solution for the delivery of their children. They haven't pre-approved the costs and payments to hospitals, so what they are doing now is negotiating. For what? For a discount by volume. In the middle of this, the health ministry is in negotiations with the doctors across Ontario. In what kind of negotiation and in what good faith would you dare suggest that you're going to have payments at a discount by volume when you're supposed to be working on some kind of a solution with our own medical professionals right here in our province? It is not acceptable. It's not acceptable for people of Essex county to think that they'd go through the tunnel or pop across the river, as was told to me by your very own minister, to have babies. Those are Canadians. Let's not talk about all of the problems that ensue with immigration, immigration laws, customs, crossing the border. It's simply ludicrous to think that is the only solution our health minister has been able to finagle, and it has not yet even cleared all the hurdles.

Let me tell you that our hospitals have already gone through restructuring. The problem with the plan by this minister is that he has also selected to cut hospital funding at the same time as hospitals are trying to restructure. The restructuring would find the savings, but you're taking the savings out before they're allowed to be found. The result of that is massive layoffs across the board in Ontario before the hospitals or the rest of the

health service sectors are in a position to continue to provide the care. It is simply a plan that doesn't make any sense. Why? Because the minister never had a plan. After spending as much time in the health field as he did as critic, I resent, as do many people who are suffering by his policy decisions, that he could not come up with some kind of workable solution. What they ask me for are solutions. I ask him to come to my riding and sit down with me and the pregnant women of my community, and we'll have lots of solutions for the minister.

Mr Cooke: I'll be relatively brief as well. I want to indicate of course that we'll be supporting the motion. I just want to make a couple of points. First of all, I get rather angry, and I think every member of the opposition does when they hear from the minister or the parliamentary assistant or other members of the Conservative caucus who say that we support the status quo. There is nobody in this place who advocates maintaining the hospital system and our health care system in the current way. We have all supported changes in our communities. We have all supported hospital restructuring across the province.

The difficulty we have with this is that the government is not being honest with the people in our communities or the province. They're taking two approaches to hospital funding in particular. They've cut \$1.3 billion out of hospital budgets over three years. That has nothing to do with restructuring. The Toronto Hospital has laid off over 300 nurses and said very clearly that it has nothing to do with the restructuring that will take place in Toronto with regard to hospitals; it has to do with the budget cut, the \$1.3 billion that was cut, the \$1.3 billion which is the big broken promise of the Conservative government.

In addition to the \$1.3 billion in cuts, they have announced that there's going to be community-by-community hospital restructuring. Again, I don't have any difficulty with the concept of communities having their hospitals and health care system restructured; I have huge problems with the way it's being done by this government. Everybody supports it. There's consensus in this province that there has to be restructuring, but what does this government do? They know that there are big political challenges to getting it done and that it takes time to do it properly. If you're going to take the time, it can't be done in three months, it can't be done in six months. Quite frankly, you have to take a look at the model, the way it was done in my community. It took a lot of time. You bring the workers together, you bring the doctors together, you bring the nurses together, you bring the community together and you sit down and do a lot of work at looking at what the options are and making decisions together.

Those decisions were made in Windsor, not by a health care restructuring commission which is simply put in place to give the government political cover; it was done by the community. I suspect, because a lot of the work was already done in Sudbury, that the same thing would have happened in that community, that the same thing would have happened in Thunder Bay. But what does this government do? They pass Bill 26 and they set up a health care restructuring commission. I'll tell you, there were some very pointed questions asked by two former ministers of health in that committee — my colleague the

member for Beaches-Woodbine and the Liberal member for Oriole — who questioned the minister time and time again about this committee being set up to simply give the government political cover.

During the Bill 26 hearings, the minister said: "The buck will stop with me. There always will be political accountability in the Legislature." What does he say now when questions are asked in the House? "Oh, it has nothing to do with me. It's an independent commission. Those decisions are being made by the independent commission." That's the purpose of this commission: not to do it right, but to do it in a way that is politically advantageous to the government. That is wrong. That will not result in a consensus being developed in community after community. It will instead develop into a war in every community in this province.

I hear the Tory backbenchers here today saying —

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe a quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check that for me?

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): A quorum is not present, Speaker. 1640

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

Mr Cooke: Speaker, I assure you that break won't help my throat at all.

What I was saying is that the process for developing a restructured health care system is as important as the objective of how we're going to get there and what we want to achieve. This government has gone all wrong in terms of process and that's why it's going to fall apart.

I hear Tory backbenchers during the debate today, when members of the opposition are speaking, saying that they know what they're doing, that they're proud to endorse this policy. The fact of the matter is some of us who have been around here for a little while remember when there was an attempt to close hospitals in the 1970s, and it wasn't done properly. The same thing is going to happen here. This is going to blow up in your face in every community.

You can, on one hand, put down your foot and say, "We're going to say who the Speaker of the House is," and think that you've really accomplished something. The fact of the matter is, on something as important as health care that's when you've got to insist to your Minister of Health and to your Premier. This is the time for the Tory backbenchers to put down their foot and to say in caucus, "It doesn't matter whether we won the battle on the Speakership; where we have to be heard is where it matters, and that's when it comes to hospital restructuring in our own communities." You cannot allow this arm's-length commission to unilaterally impose its decisions and then believe that the minister is going to have any political cover. He's not going to have cover. You're not going to have cover in your own communities.

Interjection.

Mr Cooke: I would think if you read the resolution, and that might be too much to ask, you would see that there's actually a section in the resolution that I think gets to the guts of what's happening in this province and that is a request to shut down the commission and to

restore the \$1.3 billion. That is the most important part of this resolution.

I think you've got to take a look at the process and look at what is going wrong in the communities and why you are destroying our health care system, because it's partly the process — it's as much the process as anything else — and it's also, of course, the broken promise that your government is putting in place, all directed at the tax break.

The public is catching on. There's no doubt about that at all. You're down eight points in the polls now. I believe that is very much related to the health care cuts that you've been making, the war that has been declared against the doctors of the province and the risk that you're putting patients at across the province as you continue to demoralize doctors, nurses and everyone else involved.

The one other case I want to raise for the Tory backbenchers — and my colleagues from Windsor-Essex will remember this one. In the 1970s when Frank Miller tried to close hospitals all across the province, there was a hospital in our community that he tried to close. It was Riverview chronic care hospital. The bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health thought they knew all. They said, "That hospital needs to be closed, and we can save X millions of dollars by closing it." Our community said, "No, you won't save that kind of money by restructuring those services into the other communities, and we'll prove it to you." For about five years we had a fight, and at the end of the day, with an independent review, we proved to the Ministry of Health that the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health were all absolutely wrong. That hospital remained open because it was less expensive and more efficient to leave it open.

The point is that if you think you're getting all of the information and all the goods and your political neck's on the line — not anyone else's in the Ministry of Health, your political neck's on the line — if you're going to let them make the decisions for you, look at the history of the decisions that have been made before and look at how they were turned around because the information was dead wrong. What comes out of some of the economists and others in the health ministry doesn't always make sense. You know what's best for your community. The leadership in your community, the health councils know best, and they can put together plans that reflect community needs and can save money and redirect those funds to the community.

There's one other point I want to make. When I take a look at what has happened even in my community since your party has come to power, we came to an agreement on how we would restructure our health care system in Windsor-Essex. There was a community agreement. Our government committed capital dollars to Windsor, and then when you came to power, you changed not only the amount of the dollars but also the cost-sharing arrangements for the capital.

We are now going to have to raise in Windsor-Essex, the city and the county, which have a total population of about 350,000, \$30 million just on hospital restructuring for capital, because you've changed it to 50-50, which upped the amount we had to raise significantly. In addition to that, we've got to raise \$2 million for an MRI

and we've got to raise \$2 million for additional equipment for the cancer treatment centre. Luckily, the minister reversed the policy that he tried to put in place of \$6 million for our cancer centre.

But you take a look at it and we're at about \$35 million in the health care system that the minister is saying to raise locally. It works out to nearly \$500 per family in Windsor and Essex. So they're going to get \$172 in a tax cut and they're going to be expected to contribute about \$500 each for hospital capital. It won't work. The capital portion of it, if restructuring is going to take place and if it's going to work, is just as important. The minister can say that bricks and mortar don't matter, but if you don't have a hospital system, an actual building with all of the equipment that is up to date and can accommodate the requests and the needs, it won't work.

If you put those kinds of capital needs on our community and you take a look at the numbers in Thunder Bay — I believe the number is about \$600 per family in Thunder Bay and about \$500 per family in Sudbury as well — you start putting on those kinds of capital demands and the whole thing will collapse, because you won't be able to raise that kind of money in the communities of this province. At the same time, we're asking United Ways to raise more money, we're asking agencies to raise more money, all because of government cuts. It can't be done. All our community infrastructure is going to come tumbling down because you just haven't thought it through.

The best thing to do is follow the advice in this resolution, scrap the commission, allow the communities to function, put the \$1.3 billion back into the system and allow the restructuring to save money that can be then reinvested. But don't try to fool the people by saying that all of the cuts are a result of restructuring. You've made across-the-board cuts, you've made restructuring cuts, you're doing significant damage to the health care system and you're going to pay the political price.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): People have told me in my community, "If you're going to spend my tax dollars, spend them on health." We also know Ontario spends more per person on health care than anywhere else in the world except the United States. Taxpayers expect the best health care available in return for their money.

1650

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): The big lie.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Excuse me, I believe I heard an unparliamentary comment from the member for Lake Nipigon. I wonder if you would withdraw that please. I don't believe he's in his seat either.

Mr Pouliot: Mr Speaker, with the highest of respect to your proud office, I was merely trying to correct, with your indulgence, something which is incorrect. I could have overstated and used some synonyms that were not proper. Therefore, I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I accept.

Mr Barrett: Further to that, our expenditure is \$17.7 billion on health care this year, \$300 million more than our election commitment to an ongoing health budget of no less than \$17.4 billion. By way of comparison, the provincial Liberal red book promised to spend only \$17

billion on health care, a full \$700 million less than we will spend this year on health.

The federal Liberal government is slashing its health and social transfer, as we all know, to Ontario by \$2.1 billion. Liberals are cutting health care in Ontario; Conservatives aren't. In part because of the public debt in both Canada and Ontario, we have entered a new phase in health care. After years of expansion, overall expenditures have to be stabilized. The challenge now is the reallocation of existing resources and the better management of health care dollars. There's a lot of room to manoeuvre within a budget of \$17.7 billion.

Following a recent meeting with the Ontario Medical Association, the Minister of Health reaffirmed the government's resolve to reinvest health care dollars into front-line patient and community-based services. Before reinvesting into physician, nurse and other front-line health care provider services, we must first identify the necessary savings.

In recent weeks I've been contacted by constituents concerned about the future of health care in rural areas such as my riding of Norfolk. I've spent time discussing these concerns with both the minister and his parliamentary assistant, Helen Johns. I can assure members across the way that Minister Wilson is striving to provide rural Ontario communities with the best quality of health care possible. Recent government initiatives will directly benefit Norfolk and other rural communities. For example, the township of Norfolk in my riding has recently been designated underserved.

In 1994, when leader of the third party, Mike Harris pledged that, if elected, the budget for health care would not be cut; it would remain at \$17.4 billion. However, as we've heard today, this is not a commitment to maintain the status quo. There is room to improve the way our health care dollars are spent. Premier Harris is meeting the commitment with a focus on improving medical, hospital and other health services.

While many would like to think that the budgetary problems of hospitals are over, they are not. Given the decline in federal transfers by the Liberal government in Ottawa, namely, the slashing of \$2.1 billion, Ontario must spend taxpayers' dollars even more wisely: less on administration and infrastructure, more on front-line services that provide the greatest benefit for patients.

It has been estimated, and we heard this today, that 8,400 hospital beds have been closed since 1990, the equivalent of 33 midsize hospitals. But the infrastructure that houses these beds has been left untouched. Obviously, it makes more sense to consolidate quality services among hospitals, when identified and where feasible and appropriate, and to spend health care dollars on patient services rather than on unnecessary administration, heating, air-conditioning, bricks and mortar.

What I suppose is revolutionary about this approach to improving patient services is that government is identifying savings before it spends on new health care services to patients. We are ensuring we have the money before we spend it — not really very revolutionary when you think about it.

Recently our government announced savings that have been identified in the health care budget and are being reinvested. Given these savings are to be reinvested in

health care and not, as was suggested today, to pay for a tax cut, the announcement is good news. We've freed up over \$1 billion for new, improved health care programs.

As far back as December of last year, we announced some of these reinvestments: boosting front-line paramedic emergency services, out-of-country OHIP and kidney dialysis. We will be adding 140,000 low-income Ontarians to the free drug benefit program in Ontario. Rural hospital emergency services in some areas can now access the new \$70-an-hour supplement. There are immunization programs and cardiac care. More recently, there has been the announcement of 43 community care access centres, one of which will help service people of Haldimand-Norfolk in my riding with one-stop-shopping for long-term care, institutional care, as people get older. There are the expansion of diabetes programs and long-term-care reinvestment in front-line patient focus services for tens of thousands of Ontarians.

A rural training program for medical residents in southern Ontario, based through the University of Western Ontario, has been established to train specialists in rural medicine. We are almost tripling the number of magnetic resonance imaging machines from 12 to 35, including two new choices for people in my riding, namely, services out of St Catharines and Burlington. The list of reinvestments continues to grow.

In the coming months, government will continue to reinvest. When reforms are completed and targets met, at the end of the day our health care budget will still be at \$17.4 billion a year, as pledged in our Common Sense Revolution. There have been no provincial-level cuts to health care funding.

Clearly, while hospital transfer reductions are a difficult pill to swallow, the need for new and increased front-line services is growing. The role of rural hospitals, albeit changing to accommodate new methods of patient care, remains vital to the communities that surround them. However, as patient hospital stays are reduced and more people are cared for in their own homes, it is necessary to shift funding from institutions such as hospitals to other methods of front-line care.

The need to reduce wasteful spending is not in question. Between 1990 and 1995 various studies and countless health care professionals stressed the need to restructure, but although hospital beds were closed by the thousands, the infrastructure housing these beds remains untouched, at great cost to Ontarians. It makes more sense to consolidate when feasible and appropriate. We must restructure, eliminate duplication and reduce waste in the health care system. To maintain access to essential services and to manage expenditures into the future, we need long-term solutions. This is too important to be left to partisan politics. We must continue to take the politics out of health care, just as we have through the creation of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

In June 1996 a report titled *Patterns of Health Care in Ontario* was released by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. The report calls for a truly integrated and coordinated health care system that provides affordable health care for patients today. The findings confirm the pressing priorities of not only primary care reform but also hospital restructuring.

The provincial government is making changes to the health system so that patients and taxpayers get the best services for their money. Taxpayers expect the best health care available in return for their own money — their tax dollars — and we must strive towards this goal. Reforming the primary care system and restructuring hospitals will not happen overnight, and negotiating the best prices on behalf of consumers will not be easy. It will take planning, hard work and fundamental change to make our universal health care system both client-oriented and sustainable into the future.

1700

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): In the very short time I have to address the House, I would like to start off by saying I support the resolution and then I want to tell the House what we had before the Health Services Restructuring Commission visited Sudbury and what we have after its visit. Before the commission came, we had two and a half years of public input, several — countless in fact — town hall meetings with all the health care providers attending. We had much discussion, much rationalization. We had developed a very practical local option. The DHC came with a local solution to our local health care, an option that the Ministry of Health and the minister himself endorsed, committed to.

What do we have after the commission came to Sudbury? We have a system that's far too small. The doctors say it's too small, the nurses say it's too small, the technicians say it's too small, the surgeons say it's too small, the maintenance staff says it's too small; even the cafeteria staff says it's too small. What do we have? We have too few acute care beds; we have too few chronic care beds; we have too few mental health beds; we have too few rehabilitation beds; we have no plan for transitional beds; we have no plans for beds for repatriation.

In fact, what's happened is that Sudbury's lost its designation as the referral centre for northeastern Ontario because the commission came to town. It didn't listen to the people of Sudbury; it didn't listen to the people of the region of Sudbury; it didn't listen to the people of northeastern Ontario. It had its agenda, this arm's-length commission appointed by the Minister of Health to come to Sudbury, to come to Thunder Bay and to come to the other regions of Ontario and close hospitals. At what expense?

Well, let me tell you. A commitment from the Premier of Ontario — broken, didn't make any difference. The commission was told, "Close hospitals." Mike Harris said he would honour commitments to the Catholic community — broken. The January 17 letter from the Minister of Health to the Sudbury health care providers where he endorsed the two-site model, the hot and the warm site model. He suggested at that time: "Let's get on with it. Let's do it. Let's get down to business. Let's make it work." Broken.

Then it provides in the Health Services Restructuring Commission a 30-day appeal period. It's a meaningless appeal period according to one of the members of the commission, Dr Maureen Law. "It doesn't really make any difference what the community decides. Don't expect us to suddenly support two hospital sites," she says in the interview. "The direction is quite clear. The commission

has made its decision." So the appeals process is really a sham.

The executive director of the Health Services Restructuring Commission has decided he can set fiscal policy for this province when he says in an interview on MCTV he'll buy the assets of the denominational hospitals. The executive director of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is setting fiscal policy for this province.

It doesn't make any difference to this Minister of Health or to this government. There's only one mandate that commission has and that's to close hospitals, forget about health services, forget about health care provisions, forget about what the community needs. Their mandate is to close hospitals. It's wrong, it's ill-advised, it's ill-conceived, and the Minister of Health should honour what the people of Thunder Bay and Sudbury and whatever other region this group of people goes to. Disband it because they're not fulfilling what's very, very important, what the people who are passing out these badges are saying: "Let's protect health care. Let's keep it healthy."

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Mr Speaker, I understand there's unanimous consent that we would forgo our turn but maintain our time.

The Acting Speaker: That is correct. Yes, agreed.

The Chair recognizes the member for Dufferin-Peel.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I wanted to make a few comments with respect to this resolution which has been introduced by the leader of the official opposition. I've looked at it very carefully and obviously the Liberals at least, and obviously supported by the New Democratic caucus, do not support the policies of restructuring of the Conservative government. It's interesting when you listen to what they're saying, the opposition, the members of the third party. They offer no suggestions.

Mr Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside, said that everyone believes in restructuring. Well, I haven't heard what he's saying. I haven't heard any suggestions as to what the NDP caucus would do, what the Liberal caucus would do with respect to improving the system. I assume from that, since they have no suggestions, that they don't want to eliminate waste, that they do indeed believe in the status quo.

When we have a debt of over \$100 billion, we have no choice but to restructure every organization in this province, whether it be health, education, police, whatever one can think of as far as the services the government of Ontario provides are concerned. We intend to do that. We intend to operate in a more efficient manner.

As many members from our caucus have said, as the Minister of Health has said on numerous occasions, we are not cutting health. I challenge any member of the opposition to tell us where the health budget is being cut in this province. The health budget in this province remains at \$17.4 billion. In fact there's been a commitment made by the Minister of Finance to increase that budget to \$17.7 billion. Where is that cutting health?

I'd like to tell you a little bit about what is going on in my riding. As of May 1997, we are opening a new hospital. There will be a 108-bed, 155,000-square-foot facility that is under construction as we speak, replacing

an existing, out-of-date facility, and it will service the people of Dufferin, Caledon and the surrounding areas. This will be known as the Headwaters Health Care Centre. The cost of this facility is \$42.5 million to build, equip and furnish, even though much of the equipment will come from the existing hospital.

This process started in a process of restructuring that actually started back in Mr Davis's reign and moved on through Ms Caplan, the member for Oriole, along through Ms Lankin, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, Ms Grier of one of the Etobicoke ridings, and finally to us.

We're not going to claim the credit for this hospital. This is a hospital that has been planned for a great number of years and resulted in much restructuring. We had two hospitals in our riding. We had a hospital in Shelburne and now that has become a chronic facility; in fact the merger of what is currently called the Dufferin Area Hospital, which is a 113-bed acute care facility, and the Shelburne District Hospital, which is 33 chronic care beds. Both of these hospitals, I might add, continue to operate. All of this restructuring was done in a reasonably amicable fashion.

No one likes to see hospitals closed, but I can tell you that the attitude of the opposition of slamming the current Conservative government with respect to how we are doing things — anyone who doesn't appreciate that one must have restructuring, that we must eliminate waste, hasn't a clue what they're talking about as far as running this province is concerned.

Mr Bartolucci: We're not saying that, David.

Mr Tilson: I'm sorry, but you are saying that because you're not offering any suggestion as to how the health services in this province need to operate.

The Minister of Health is taking savings that he's taking in the health care system and reinvesting them around this province. One of the areas — fortunately, I must say, my area has benefited — has to do with the dialysis machine which was just recently reopened in the town of Orangeville. That means patients who require that treatment, who normally require three trips to downtown Toronto, now can receive that service in Orangeville. That is occurring all around this province, these dialysis machines, and it's called reinvesting; it's called making savings in the health care system and reinvesting them around the province.

At the opening there were three or four patients and their families who were there, who were amazingly thankful, who no longer have to drive to the city of Toronto to receive this treatment. They can receive this treatment in this area. The people of Caledon, the people from areas such as Wellington and other areas around our county of Dufferin and our town of Caledon, can receive these services.

This is the type of reinvestment that is so much needed in this province and that really hasn't gone on in the past. We have a great need to reinvest. There is a need to seek out other investments.

I read one of the 90-second statements last week in this House with respect to a company by the name of Husky Injection Molding Systems Ltd of Bolton. They reinvested. They've made a donation to our health care centre of \$1 million. They did that for an innovative X-ray system. What this system is doing, it's a digital

imaging system. It's not a luxury. It will keep up with the increase in volume. It will make diagnosis easier with respect to cases. It will make them more accurate, because we can see more. The Headwaters system will acquire, display and store 100% of its X-ray, ultrasound and fluoroscopic images using digital technology, completely eliminating the use of conventional film processes. I think this system is the first in the world and I believe this hospital in Orangeville and Caledon will be one of the finest health facilities in the world. I challenge anyone to question that.

1710

I can do nothing with respect to representing the people of Caledon and the people of Dufferin but boast about the work that the Minister of Health is doing. I know we're having a lot of problems with respect to people in the north who are talking about hospitals closing. I understand that. But I challenge you, and I notice there are a number of members in the north, particularly in the Liberal caucus, who challenge us and say, "Why are you doing this?" The question I throw out to you is, "Is there an alternative?" You must know —

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: I seem to have got something going here, Mr Speaker, but I will —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, guys. Order, please.

Mr Tilson: Mr Speaker, I didn't mean to get the Liberal caucus all excited.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: No, I did not wish to make you excited. I'm simply saying I haven't heard any alternatives from that group of three right there. I've heard no alternatives as to how you're going to restructure, how you're going to save the waste that's going on in this province. All you're saying is: "Don't do this. Don't do this. Don't do this." You have absolutely no alternatives that you've put forward.

Our hospital, which is called the Headwaters Health Care Centre, will be a world-class centre demonstrating to hospitals the benefits of digital imaging, a system that is better for the patient, environment and financial efficiency. The pricetag for this system is \$3.23 million. Husky Injection Molding Systems Ltd of Bolton is providing \$1 million of that, and the rest has already been budgeted in the \$5.2-million capital campaign of the hospital in our area for a traditional department that would be digital-ready in the future. Plus, there will be revenue from the sale of the current equipment and the hospital will be paid by the vendor for demonstrations provided at the site for clients around the world.

So that is a plan to do things differently. That is a plan which is going on in our Ministry of Health as to doing things differently, to improving the quality of health care in this province. If we kept going with the way the previous Liberal government and the former NDP government had gone, we would no longer be spending one third of our budget on health care. That would be creeping up to one half of our budget in the years ahead, and that is totally unacceptable. So we have no choice. Because of the policies of the previous governments, the previous Liberal and NDP governments, we have absolutely no choice but to undertake and we believe that this

will create a better health care system in the province of Ontario.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Let me begin by congratulating my leader for bringing this motion forward to the House. We all know of her concern for the destruction which is taking place today in terms of Ontario's health care system. But just to reply to the previous speaker, he's talking about a 30% income tax reduction on one hand, \$20 billion that this government is going to borrow to give the rich in Ontario an income tax decrease. He asked me how we can fix some of the problems here in Ontario. I tell him to forget about the income tax reduction. That money could go into the hospitals in the Kenora riding, into the region.

I go on to the Harris government as it slashes \$1.3 billion, or 18%, of the funding for hospitals without any regard for the hardships that both remote and northern hospitals experience. They have no regard for that. They send in their commission to tell the people of northwestern Ontario what will happen.

Let's go back to what the government got elected on, what it called the Common Sense Revolution. What did they say about health care in terms of the Common Sense Revolution? "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important. And frankly, as we get older, we are going to need it more and more." This was the commitment made by Mike Harris in the Common Sense Revolution. It goes on to say, "Northerners are sick and tired of people in Queen's Park telling them what to do." Yet what do we have develop with Bill 26? We have a Health Services Restructuring Commission, a non-elected body, to go up and tell people in the north what health care they can have and what health care they cannot have. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to take a look at what the Premier said in his Common Sense Revolution when he was approaching the people of Ontario and what he's doing today and to see the difference in what he's doing to health care in the north today.

I'd like to go back to the Minister of Health and let him know what some of the people in northern Ontario are actually saying. I have here a letter from the Kenora Adult Community Mental Health Services and Challenge Club Committee. They're talking about the psychiatric hospital in Thunder Bay:

"We have learned recently that it is the intent to reduce inpatient psychiatric beds to 51. The number seems unduly low when considering the size of the region being serviced...."

"The concept of reducing money spent in institutional care to increase money allocated to community resources may have some merit. This, however, does not seem to be occurring as community program budgets continue to be decreased at the same time institution budgets are cut."

As well, I have a letter from a minister, the Reverend Robin Wardlaw, in Sioux Lookout. He goes on to write:

"The government has insisted that its cuts will not affect users of the various services being reduced...."

"On behalf of the ministerial association of Sioux Lookout, I suggest that your government could either stop the persistent erosion of our health care system or have the courtesy, honesty and courage to say that patient services are being affected and apologize for the added suffering that is ensuing from your changes."

Those are just a couple of people in communities throughout northwestern Ontario who are feeling these cuts, which this government don't seem to realize. What the minister has to do is begin to listen to the people in the front line, the people who see the patients on a daily basis, and get his act straightened out and fulfil his commitment not to cut health care services to the people of northern Ontario.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to comment. One of the things I found interesting from listening to government backbenchers speak was that they seem to put forward the idea that there are no alternatives except the one they're offering and that this commission is the only way to go. Quite frankly, the reality is that in the communities where this commission has landed like a tornado and decimated the health care system there have been local plans, local options that apparently have been overlooked. Listening to what's happened in Thunder Bay and what's happened in Sudbury and worrying about what's about to happen in Ottawa and London, that's why I've been on my feet talking about the fact that in Hamilton, because they're scheduled to come fairly soon into Hamilton, we also have a local plan that has buy-in by all the major players in the health care system that does let us identify a restructuring process that will work in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The emphasis I'm making on restructuring is crucial, because we don't believe that's what this government is interested in. What they are interested in is cutting. They can stand on their feet and make all the speeches they want that cutting is not happening, but the reality is that they've taken out \$1.3 billion and have not yet re-committed those dollars back into the community health care system. One of the things I'm most concerned about is that in Hamilton-Wentworth, without the reinvestment of the money that's saved from restructuring, the plan won't work. If your goal is just to extract money out of Hamilton-Wentworth, to take money out of our health care system, then you're on the right track. Your commission is indeed the way to go. Without looking at the local plan, adapting the local plan and reinvesting the money that's saved, you are ripping millions of dollars out of the Hamilton-Wentworth health care system, which is in direct violation of the promise you made not to take away from health care. I think you said, "Not one cent from health care." I'm going to revisit that issue before I'm finished.

1720

The other thing I want to mention at this point is that we also know there's a bit of a shell game going on here. The leader of my party, Howard Hampton, in question period has raised the question of responsibilities, such as those for the disabled, that are now with different ministries and different funding envelopes, being shifted over to the health care budget. It's insulting to the people of Ontario that this government would think the people are so ignorant that they can't see this scam. If you do not increase the health care budget by the amount of money needed to fund the programs and services you've moved from another ministry, you have de facto made a cut.

You can still stand up here and out on the hustings and in your various ridings say, "The budget is still at \$17.4

billion," you can still say there hasn't been one cent taken away from that, but if you have moved services and programs from other ministries into that ministry without bringing the money over, you have in effect cut that budget. If you think you're going to pull that off, you indeed have another think coming. We must never lose sight, as the resolution points out, that all this is not in aid of a better health care system. What is driving this is your need to find money to pay for your tax cut, which benefits your wealthy friends.

I see my honourable friend from Hamilton Mountain mimicking me on my feet when I say this. I say to him, where are you going to be when that commission comes rolling into Hamilton and attempts to shut down hospitals? Where are you going to be then, member for Hamilton Mountain? I know where I'll be. I'll be fighting for the hospitals and the health care system in Hamilton. Where the hell are you going to be? You just watch yourself before you start mimicking people. You've got a responsibility here.

They sit up there, those Tory backbenchers, and every time there's a major issue in Hamilton they're nowhere to be found. But the member wants to sit in the House and make fun of those of us who are trying to fight for the people in Hamilton-Wentworth. I say shame on you. You've got your nerve.

When we talk about the health care system and the cuts this government is making, I want to add to the list of scams and shams that I've already outlined. When I've talked about the fact that moving of the responsibilities is a de facto cut and about the fact that they've cut money from that budget and have not committed a reinvestment in communities, there's a third area I want to raise while I'm speaking on this particular resolution.

There is in the province of Ontario something called the Occupational Disease Panel. It may not be that well known by an awful lot of government members or perhaps by people in the public, but that panel right now is in place to identify occupational health disease and illnesses that are caused by the workplace. If the members opposite would pay a little more attention to the health and safety of workers than they are to their heckling techniques, they would appreciate that this is an important part of the health care system overall.

What's interesting about this panel is that it was created because the WCB was not doing the job. WCB was not linking the diseases and illnesses that workers were experiencing with exposure to chemicals and work practices in the workplace. They weren't doing it. For over 70 years it was known that asbestos causes cancer, but the WCB was not about to recognize that in a timely enough fashion. We know that the Occupational Disease Panel has identified more occupational diseases in the last five years than the WCB did in the previous 25.

My reason for raising this in the context of the resolution is that if this government moves ahead, as the leaked document I made public last week points out they're going to do, disbands it and puts it back in the WCB, in effect that job won't be done. There's no way that, particularly under this government, the WCB is going to do what they weren't doing before. Hell, it was a Tory government that introduced the concept of the Occupational Disease Panel. It was Bill Davis, because he

realized and accepted that WCB was not doing the job. It was a scandalous situation, and he did take steps; not quickly enough, but he did take steps. One of them was the creation of this panel. This government plans to kill that and put it back inside the WCB.

What are the implications for workers? The implication for workers is that causes of illness and disease in the workplace are not going to be identified the way they would be when this panel existed. That means that workers are going to become sick, and they're going to die in cases when they shouldn't and needn't have if this panel were left in place.

The other thing is that a lot of these costs are going to spill over into the publicly funded health care system, because who else is going to pick up the work? If we don't identify the legitimate workplace causes of disease and illness and therefore allow people to legitimately and rightly receive WCB, it means ultimately they're going to see themselves possibly as people on social assistance rolls.

WCB is not paid for by taxpayers. WCB is paid for by employers who have a responsibility to provide the funding because they have the legal protection that workers cannot sue them in the case of injury and disease and accident in the workplace. Anything that legitimately prevents workers from receiving money they're entitled to from the WCB means that the general public is going to pay for it, but we know that this government is more interested in taking away the rights of workers in WCB and giving those employers a 5% cut in their premiums than they ever will be in workers' protection and health and safety in the province.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Who started the de-indexation? You did.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the Minister of Labour chirping from the other side. Let me just say to the minister that I would think, given the track record that you personally have to answer for in terms of workers' rights, particularly as they relate to health and safety, you ought to be sitting there in shame, not attempting to heckle in this House.

Let me return to the issue of the restructuring in this commission. You, sir, as a member of the Tory caucus, as well as the member for Hamilton West — I see the members for Hamilton West and Hamilton Mountain are here — all of us are going to have to decide, as representatives of citizens in Hamilton-Wentworth, where we're going to be if that commission rolls into Hamilton and overrides a local proposal that, interestingly enough, was supported by the backbench Tory members as an alternative to the first plan that shut down the hospital in my riding in downtown Hamilton, St Joseph's Hospital.

What is going to be interesting and crucial for all of you, I say with respect, is that if the commission rolls in and overrules the local plan that you and I supported that was built at the local level, overrides it, or if there is a failure of your minister to guarantee — we still don't have that commitment in Hamilton-Wentworth even with the new plan — if we don't receive a commitment from your Minister of Health that the money saved will be reinvested in Hamilton-Wentworth, I think you've got an obligation to speak out not for the Premier and the government and their hatchet commission; you've got a

responsibility to speak out for the people of Hamilton-Wentworth.

That means supporting the local plan and it means making sure every dollar that's been restructured is reinvested in our community, because to do otherwise is to turn your back on the people of Hamilton-Wentworth, to turn your back on our health care system and to make sure you're toeing the party line.

I can only hope that when the day comes, we'll see six united MPPs in Hamilton-Wentworth, all six of us representing all three parties, stand united behind our local restructuring plan and the part of it that has that money reinvested back in our community. Both those things are crucial to the health care system in Hamilton-Wentworth. There is a local plan.

1730

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): You'll be running for mayor then. You'll be running for mayor of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Durham East, come to order.

Mr Christopherson: It will work. It needs to be respected; it deserves to be respected. It would be an absolute miscarriage of justice for this government to allow your phoney arm's-length commission to roll in and cast that agreement and that plan aside. Secondly, it's equally important that all six of us stand behind the concept that every dollar saved in restructuring on the institutional side, meaning hospitals, is reinvested back in our community so that we can have the total type of health care system that we deserve and that quite frankly the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth have a right to believe they were getting a guarantee of when they elected four out of six Tories.

I think people in Hamilton-Wentworth have a right to expect that from the Tory members as well as the two opposition members and I challenge the four of you to be there on both those issues. Support our local option and be there to fight for that money to be reinvested back in Hamilton-Wentworth. If you don't, then you've broken a local promise that simply ties to the larger promise your Minister of Health has already broken.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I hope I can use the remaining time that's available this afternoon to place on the record some very serious numbers.

First of all, I had it brought to my attention that the member for Windsor-Riverside claimed that hospital restructuring in his community was funded at the new 50% formula for capital projects. However, the facts are that restructuring in the Windsor area was funded under the old system of two thirds by the province and one third by the community. I think the member for Riverside would want to have that fact correctly recorded in Hansard. In fact, the province spent \$48 million of the \$72 million for their capital projects. Just in the past year, the province gave his community \$48 million. So it's kind of interesting that he would not have those numbers accurate.

It's Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Canada and today there was a luncheon in Toronto. This luncheon was organized by the Ontario chapter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. The reason I want to say something about it and the reason I'm wearing this pink ribbon is because this government has today announced

\$24.5 million to introduce extended screening against breast cancer. When we look at what restructuring in the health care system means, it means just that: It means restructure, it means taking existing unnecessary expenditures and spending that money where it's needed. I would suggest, Mr Speaker, to you and to my colleagues on all sides of this House that the second-greatest killer of women in this province being cancer and of that cancer, it's breast cancer and lung cancer, I'm sure that every member in this House who represents their constituency would want treatment of breast cancer and research into the cause of breast cancer to be a paramount priority.

Today at this luncheon in Toronto, the private sector raised over \$300,000. There is a commitment in this province by the private sector to fund research into breast cancer. There is a commitment in this province today by our government to fund breast cancer screening.

At the luncheon today — and I would like to mention that Premier Harris spent three hours at this luncheon — he came to that luncheon and he was the only elected official who was still there at the end, which in my opinion demonstrated a very clear commitment to the women in that audience who have been victims of breast cancer. In that audience there were women who had been victims not only once but twice.

In the announcement that our government made today to committing \$24.5 million to our campaign against breast cancer, they told us that by the year 2000 about 325,000 Ontario women will be screened for breast cancer each year and in this expansion program we will be establishing 11 new sites for the breast screening cancer program.

The Premier said — and this is the point that's important in this debate this afternoon, "This is an important reinvestment that will help us identify and treat breast cancer more quickly." He said, "This government has said it will put patients first, and we promised in the Ontario budget that we would improve early detection of breast cancer. This expansion will do that." That commitment today by the Premier, in my humble opinion, speaks volumes about what restructuring is about. With Premier Harris and his wife, Janet, at that luncheon today, we feel that the sincerity of the government in terms of priorities has been very clearly demonstrated.

I can't imagine anyone in this House wanting to defend keeping half-filled buildings or two-thirds-filled buildings open when we can save money by amalgamating the hospital services. For those of us who do a lot of hospital visitation, when we walk down corridor after corridor with inactive beds, whole wards closed off, what sense does it make to heat and cool and clean parts of hospitals that are no longer being used?

Nine thousand hospital beds have been closed in this province, and that equates to about 33 midsized hospitals. It just doesn't make any sense to keep those buildings open when that kind of accommodation can be achieved, where necessary, by amalgamating existing buildings, and how important it is that, by closing some of those hospitals, we can fund a program like the breast cancer screening program.

1740

While I'm speaking about this Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, which today celebrated its 10th anniversary,

I want to commend to you, Mr Speaker, and to the members of this Legislature the people who have worked very hard to make that foundation a success. Our gratitude cannot be adequately expressed to the people who have been involved. Today's awareness day in Toronto, for example, was co-chaired by Carol Loberg and Beth Miller. These two women, along with their committee of very dedicated people, have worked for a whole year to bring about this awareness day.

We were told today that a year ago people didn't even want to talk about breast cancer, a particular kind of cancer that affects women. Obviously, it was at that time a subject that was a no-no. You just didn't talk about it, even though I personally know of a constituent in my riding who has now survived a double mastectomy for 20 years.

The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, in terms of the Ontario chapter, has been able to raise the kind of moneys they have over the past 10 years with the support of CIBC, Shoppers Drug Mart, Hallmark Canada, Crabtree and Evelyn, and Revlon. It's very interesting to hear the person from Revlon say that they worry about women's looks but they care about women's lives.

I think that's the thought I would like to leave with my colleagues this afternoon, that by restructuring, not by reducing, the health care budget — because it has not been reduced; there has been no provincial government cut to health care funding — and by spending money in the places where the priorities are, we are able to help provide the kind of services that are needed in this province every day. Without restructuring, we simply don't have the money.

If we look in my own riding of Mississauga, we now have an MRI unit at the Mississauga Hospital. Interestingly enough, I saw a list of places in the north. Sudbury, Timmins and the Sault all have MRI — magnetic resonance imaging machines — because of an allocation of funding for that purpose.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm pleased to have a chance to give my account of the effect of the Big Blue Bulldozer. I've seen it roll through my community, unaffected by whom it hurts and leaving a path of northwestern Ontario residents frightened about the future of their health care services.

When the commission first released its initial recommendations on June 27, Thunder Bay was shaken to its core. This report recommended a reduction of half of our acute care beds, a better than one third reduction of our chronic care beds and the closure of our psychiatric facility. I'm proud to say that my community rallied around this issue with a desperate need to make the commission understand that what it proposed was simply wrong for a community that serves as a regional centre for northwestern Ontario. Thousands of people wrote, phoned, faxed and attended public rallies in an attempt to make the commission listen to reason.

I want to give you a small sample of what some of the people said when they wrote to the commission and the minister. Prue Morton of the Patient Rights Association in Thunder Bay wrote: "It is obvious that health care cuts are necessary, but the draconian and almost immediate cuts dictated by your report would put the quality of that care in grave jeopardy for many people in northwestern

Ontario. Indeed, even substandard health care may often become unobtainable."

From Lakehead University, Sandi Covino wrote: "I am devastated at the havoc you are wreaking on our city. Please rethink your decisions before you leave us with no physicians, no decent medical care and a community in medical crisis."

Parents wrote about sons and daughters who rely on the current level of health services for their needs. Sons and daughters wrote about parents who rely on those same services.

As we know, the commission delivered its final recommendations on October 4. There were some concessions, such as a delay in the closure of the psychiatric hospital, but the figures say pretty well the same. Our chronic, acute and psychiatric services have been bulldozed by the Big Blue Machine and we are yet still being compelled to raise \$45 million for services that simply can't fill the need in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

While restructuring may be necessary, this government and the Minister of Health refuse to draw on our community for solutions. They altered the capital funding arrangements and they interfered where they said they wouldn't, all to raise money to support their tax cut at the expense of the health of northwestern Ontario. We will fight this till the end.

Mr Bradley: I want to, and very briefly, unfortunately, participate in this debate I think in a very constructive way with some good suggestions for the government on how they should proceed.

First of all, I agree with and will be voting for the resolution. I think we have to look at why we're in the circumstances we're facing at the present time. In my view, the depth of the cuts and the rapidity of the cuts are both related to the fact that this government has insisted upon moving with a 30% income tax cut which will benefit the richest people in our society the most.

Therefore, I think very conservative economists said to the government, and they're telling governments all over the world: "Until you balance the budget you shouldn't be relinquishing this revenue. Once you balance it, you can look at it, but don't relinquish this revenue because you'll have to make deep cuts in such things as health care." And that's happening.

In the last election campaign, I know of no Progressive Conservative candidate, no Mike Harris candidate, who went around saying, "We're going to close hospitals." I couldn't find any in the Niagara Peninsula, and indeed my PC opponent was Dr Archie Heide, who worked very hard in St Catharines for the services at St Catharines General hospital. I think he must have been shocked when he saw all of the hospital closings that are being announced and the fights with the doctors in this province.

When I talk to the people I represent, they consider health care to be a very high priority, if not the highest priority, and they're prepared to put forward the funds necessary to have a good health care system. They know that thousands of nurses and support and operational staff have been or are about to be cast out the doors of hospitals across Ontario. You can't have fewer staff and fewer resources and still provide the excellent kind of

service that's been available in our hospitals in the years gone by, as our health care critic has said on many occasions.

You've alienated members of the medical profession. You've alienated health care workers. Canadians have been proud of their health care system in the past and have told that to their elected representatives. They see this, however, now weakening considerably. Many municipalities, such as my own, have already worked hard to avoid duplication of services. They've already rationalized; they've already restructured in many ways. People have volunteered their time, have given their money to the hospitals, and they now see these hospitals under assault.

What you've done successfully is you've intimidated district health councils around the province simply by not providing the funding for them to carry out their responsibilities in hospitals, and now many of them are afraid to speak out against you for fear that their hospital or their services will be cut back. So if you want to be proud of that, you have been successful politically in intimidating them. I don't think it's something you should be proud of, however. You slash funding and then you instruct the local commissions to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Under Bill 26, the massive omnibus budget bill, you've set up a provincial commission which will second-guess any local commission if they don't cut deep and cut quickly. Mental health services in our area have deteriorated considerably and need a lot of work.

Anyway, I indicated I would be relatively brief. I wish there was more time. But I simply want to put on record now that I, as a representative of the Niagara Peninsula, will not stand by in this House while the Minister of Health closes the St Catharines General or the Hotel Dieu Hospital or the Shaver Hospital in St Catharines, or the Niagara-on-the-Lake General Hospital in Niagara-on-the-Lake, or the Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls, or the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital at Grimsby, or the Port Colborne General Hospital or the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie. I call upon the minister to maintain those hospitals and those hospital services for the people of our part of the province and to keep a promise I think everybody in this Legislature made to maintain a strong health care and hospital system.

1750

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): It is my pleasure to wrap up the debate for our caucus. As our health critic, I would say this is a very important motion that we have before us and it's a very important opposition day, because this is a day when every member on the Conservative government caucus should be listening to the impassioned pleas and speeches that are being made by members on this side of the House. During the election campaign, your Premier and your candidates were very clear that they would protect health care, very clear that there would be no cuts. I heard Premier Harris say in the debates, "I have no plan to close hospitals." I say to you that if you consider what you are doing, then you will realize you must stop what you are doing. It is a reckless path of destruction. You are demoralizing those people on the front lines who deliver care, and health care is about caring for people.

I don't think there are very many people who would disagree that changes are necessary. In the past, we've talked about rationalization, but I'll tell you something, you have given the word "restructuring" a very bad name, because restructuring now says to communities, "They're going to come in and close your hospitals." They're not coming in to develop a seamless continuum of care that starts with primary care and secondary care and tertiary care and long-term care and rehab care and community care and make sure that it's people who are cared for through this kind of a system, because clearly we have no system today. I remember standing on the other side of this House advocating for the development of a system where patients' needs and patients' interests were of primary focus.

My fear is that your minister, your Premier and members of the Conservative caucus are actually saying many of the things that should give communities comfort, but the actions of their restructuring commission, their dictatorial secret hearings, their approach in communities where they don't have to listen, they're going to come in and they're going to do it to you and they're going to do it quick because they want that money to pay for their tax cut and they don't care who gets hurt in the meantime, that all of the restructuring from the restructuring commission is predicated on a US-style managed care model which we do not have today, and I would argue that unless we look very carefully at the kind of responsibility that providers and administrators and community representatives have as part of the development of a true system of true network, we are in serious jeopardy of destroying that which so many of us have laboured so long and so hard to build.

We have heard your Minister of Health say that care is not about bricks and mortar, and in fact he's right, but when you hear estimates of 15,000 nurses who provide care on the front line of our hospitals being laid off, not being shifted to other jobs in the community — the minister stands and says, "There are going to be jobs in the community." They're not there. There are huge gaps. People are going to be hurt.

I urge this government today, I urge the government backbenchers to call a halt to the restructuring commission, which has nothing whatever to do in its mandate about developing a system. They have no mandate to look at integrated care models or comprehensive health organizations. They are only looking at closing the hospitals in your communities too, and today is your opportunity to stand up and be counted, to tell Harris and Wilson that their agenda is not on, that it's not going to work in York region just as it's not going to work in Thunder Bay, and that communities will refuse to do what you are going to try and force them to do. It is bad, bad, bad for everyone when we have that kind of system imposed on people. I support this motion and ask for your support.

The Speaker: Mrs McLeod has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There will be a five-minute bell; call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1802.

The Speaker: Will all those in favour of the motion please rise one by one.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Miclash, Frank
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Marion	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Pouliot, Gilles
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Caplan, Elinor	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Laughren, Floyd	Wildman, Bud
Cleary, John C.	Martel, Shelley	
Cooke, David S.	Martin, Tony	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Harnick, Charles	Preston, Peter
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Saunderson, William
Carr, Gary	Jackson, Cameron	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Tascona, Joseph N.
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Turnbull, David
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Vankoughnet, Bill
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Villeneuve, Noble
Fisher, Barbara	Marland, Margaret	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Froese, Tom	Maves, Bart	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, Terence H.
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	
Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): : The ayes are 31, the nays are 58.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost. It now being past 6 of the clock, I move this House be adjourned until tomorrow at 10 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1805.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
108	4549	2	17	want to reassume the fight that Ed Deibel from North

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
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Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

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(Hansard)**

Thursday 17 October 1996

Jeudi 17 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 17 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 17 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1003.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Mr Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'm pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 83. I do this, asking for the support of my colleagues in the Legislature, because I feel this is a bill that is non-partisan in nature. It is intended to fill a gap that I feel exists in the present consumer protection legislation. The purpose of the bill is to extend the scope of protection provided to consumers under the Consumer Protection Act to include protection from the practice of negative option billing or negative option marketing with respect to provision of services.

As the members may know, the act is a relatively short one. It is intended that to the wording that is there at the present time we add the word "services," which means "personal property or services furnished to a person who did not request them and a request shall not be inferred from inaction or the passing of time alone, but does not include,

"(a) personal property or services that the recipient knows or ought to know are intended for another person, or

"(b) personal property or services supplied under a contract in writing to which the recipient is a party that provides for the periodic supply of personal property or services to the recipient without further solicitation."

Further, the bill includes two clauses, one being, "No action shall be brought by which to charge any person for payment in respect of unsolicited goods or services notwithstanding their use, misuse, loss, damage or theft," and, "Except as provided in this section, the recipient of unsolicited goods or services, or of a credit card that has not been requested or accepted in accordance with subsection (2), has no legal obligation in respect of their use or disposal."

This really is an issue of fairness. It's fairness to the consumer that I'm seeking here. People should opt for services they want and not opt out of services they don't want. It's also an issue of fairness to business. Bill 83

will help level the playing field for those businesses that play fair with their consumers. Businesses that provide consumers with informed choices win with this amendment.

I too, like many, believe that in many instances it is buyer beware, but there are those instances, in the case of negative option marketing, where the methods used may not always be the fairest. Certainly by far the majority of businesses in the province of Ontario act in a fair and level playing field manner. The real reason we have regulations and laws is not only for those who always abide by the rules but to provide some protection in those areas where some do not always abide by the rules.

Bill 83 puts consumers first. After all, the act it's amending is the Consumer Protection Act. We have felt in the past that there needed to be some protection for consumers when it comes to unsolicited credit and the receipt of unsolicited goods. In this business world today in the 1990s the service industry is one of the most rapidly expanding areas in business. Therefore, I felt that the act needed to be brought up to date and that services needed to be included with the receipt of credit and goods. If the service is confusing, then business should explain it and let the consumer decide. That's the free market action. That's people making choices. That's people making informed choices.

Complexity of a product or service is no excuse for failure to give consumers the opportunity for positive action as opposed to negative action. As just happened recently, and this is only an example, our household received a telephone call from a company that's in the business of consumer products and was offered a disability insurance plan for 60 days free. I have to say I didn't receive the call, although the policy is issued in my name. My wife received the call. She knows of my concern in this area, so in the normal course of events as to what might happen in many households she said, "Why sure, send it out." It's a \$250,000 group insurance policy. The letter I received with it says:

1010

"You don't pay a cent for the first 60 days. Your first 60 days of protection are provided at no cost to you. For your convenience, after the 60-day bonus period, your monthly premium will automatically be billed to your account."

You might say a prudent person should be able to understand that, but many people might not understand the implications of that, and this is only an example. What happens, I am told, in the industry is that 80% of those who are offered this kind of negative option then go on to pay the premium, or at least it's billed to their account or their bank account. It's only the 20% who then perhaps, after receiving the material, didn't understand it at the outset, don't want the coverage and

therefore cancel it. The company then only has to work on that 20%, but I think it's interesting that 80% of the people who are offered options such as this continue to pay it.

We want those companies that take the time to explain, that perhaps take the time to interview the potential consumer, that take the time to get their signature on the dotted line, if you like. We think this bill will level the playing field with those companies that operate in perhaps a more open and understandable way. Clearly it's an issue of fairness to the consumer, but it's also, as I mentioned earlier, an issue of fairness to business by prohibiting what has been popularly called negative option marketing.

I don't want to confuse anybody with the term "negative option billing" as opposed to "negative option marketing." I've introduced that description of it so that you will understand that it covers a much broader area. Marketing is what it's all about. Marketing is what business is about today. We're in a highly competitive environment, and consumers in many cases are deluged with offers of various kinds of services.

I just hope, with the discussion that will ensue on this bill, and hopefully with the passage of the bill, that it will raise the level of awareness and that we can continue to advise the public of its responsibility in the area of purchases, but also the responsibility that business has to be fair, open, honest and do all it can to make sure consumers understand the product they're purchasing.

I'm hopeful that this bill will pass with the support of all sides of the Legislature and that we can act quickly to facilitate the passage of Bill 83. These changes, I suggest, clearly put the consumer first. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate? Normally we go from one party to the third party and then to the Conservatives. If there is unanimous consent obviously, would you — no? Therefore, the member for Durham Centre.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I'm pleased to have an opportunity this morning to speak to Bill 83. The bill raises once again the issue of consumers and unsolicited goods and services. The Consumer Protection Act now includes goods; it does not include the word "services."

As a matter of principle, this issue has been dealt with recently in a certain context. For example, in the auto insurance context the minister without portfolio with responsibility for privatization has written to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, urging the insurance industry to continue its efforts to explain to consumers the options open to them under the auto insurance legislation, which is Bill 59. His letter also states that the government will not tolerate negative option billing. That's dealing with the specific issue of auto insurance.

In addition, in December 1994 the Honourable Cam Jackson introduced a private member's bill, Bill 206, in the Legislature which did not pass during the majority government of the NDP. It dealt in a more sophisticated and detailed manner with the issue of services and products than does Bill 83, which is before us today.

Having said that, as a matter of principle this bill does address an important issue for consumers in the province.

There are serious flaws with the bill that are matters of concern which arise out of the fact that the bill simply seeks to add a word, "services," to the various sections and subsections of the bill which were drafted with goods in mind.

For example, now we have a situation where "services" is not defined in Bill 83, which will lead to doubt and uncertainty. The fact that the same rules that apply to goods have been extended unaltered to services in the bill means that a certain mismatch of concepts occurs which may result in a lack of clarity, which in turn exacerbates the issue of what services are covered or meant to be covered by the sections' provisions.

The definition of "goods" in section 1 of the act is limited to personal property, which tends to be tangible in nature. "Services," however, may be either tangible or intangible, and that's not dealt with in Bill 83. The current legislative language which has successfully prohibited providers of unsolicited goods from suing to recover payment, "notwithstanding their use, misuse, loss, damage or theft," may not provide the same level of protection to a recipient of unsolicited services which may not be capable of loss or damage although arguably capable of use, misuse or theft in certain circumstances.

The point is a lack of clarity and precision and a lack of matching of concepts and definitions in this bill. The result is a rather clumsy effort to accomplish the goal. Having said that, the issue is one that is appropriately addressed in Bill 83. It also doesn't deal with many complaints the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations gets with respect to this type of issue. A great deal of work will have to be done to make Bill 83 into an appropriate, useful piece of legislation for consumers in Ontario.

Having said all that and expressed those quite serious concerns about the flawed nature of this bill before the House today, I certainly don't intend to urge my colleagues in this part of the House to vote against it simply because the NDP majority did not support Mr Jackson's private member's Bill 206 or because the Liberals, on the opposite side, chose to block my private member's Bill 33 and not even let it come to a vote in this Legislative Assembly. I think it's incumbent on us, in dealing with private members' business, to try to support private members' bills that have a kernel of usefulness to consumers in the province. This bill would need a tremendous amount of work to bring it into a condition where it would be a useful and progressive piece of legislation.

For these reasons I intend to vote in principle in support of Bill 83 on second reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Frank Michlash (Kenora): I'd like first of all to commend my colleague the member for Essex-South on his legislation. We know his great commitment and dedication to consumer protection. I'm sure all members of the House will want to take a very close look at what he's introduced here today.

We see this protection in a good number of provinces. It's protection against what the member has introduced as negative option marketing or negative option billing. I'm suggesting here that the member has done a good amount

of research into what is going on in other provinces and I don't think we have to reinvent the wheel when we see that provinces such as Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Quebec have already introduced this type of legislation.

1020

As the member for Essex South has indicated, this is a bill regarding fairness; that, of course, being fairness to the consumer. The people who are consuming the product should be able to opt for the services they want and they should not have to opt out of the services they don't want. In essence, this is what my colleague from Essex South is indicating in bringing forward Bill 83.

As well, we're talking about fairness to business, to businesses that operate throughout all of our communities. Bill 83 will help level that playing field where you have businesses that play fair with the consumer and some that actually don't. I am sure we all, as members, can come up with many examples where we've seen businesses that weren't quite as fair as they should have been with the consumer. I know I have a good number of these cases that come through my door on a fairly regular basis and I think anything to do with the consumer and the protection of the consumer, such as what my friend has introduced here today, is something that everyone in the House should be looking at supporting.

I think what this bill does is to place the consumer first, and that is very important. I've indicated that they've already done this in other provinces and I think it's incumbent upon us as legislators here in the House to place that consumer as other provinces have already done. I think if there's any kind of service that is confusing to the consumer, it should be incumbent upon the business to explain that. Our consumers should be able to make informed choices on information that they should be able to get from businesses before they make their purchases.

There are often very complex rules and regulations or complex negotiations that come with many products. I think it has to be incumbent upon the business to make sure that the consumer is provided with the information that will allow them to make an informed choice when they go to purchase a product or a service. Again, I think that's very important.

The recent auto insurance billing issue is a real example of where the consumers, if they were informed, were able to take advantage of lower rates. Unfortunately, if they were not informed, the bill came in the mail, as it has always, and they weren't informed that there would be premiums that they could actually take advantage of. This where I talk about the uninformed consumer.

I had an example just yesterday where a 20-year-old purchasing insurance for his vehicle found that rates were enormous when he took a look at what he was going to pay here in Ontario. He moved to Manitoba to take a course at school and found out that his rates were one quarter the cost in Manitoba for more coverage on his vehicle. This was a 20-year-old constituent who found a great difference. I don't think the insurance company actually informed him of his choices and what he could have been looking at, so again, I think this is very important that the government help protect that particular consumer.

We take a look at Bill 83 and it recognizes that the Consumer Protection Act has to be updated to reflect the realities of our economy today, our new economy, one that is becoming increasingly based on the transaction of services and one that is changing on a daily basis. I think Bill 83 addresses a long overdue prohibition on the marketing technique that is a severe irritant to consumers.

Some people may argue that negative option marketing can increase efficiency and work to the benefit of consumers. While this could be the case with some businesses, I really don't see where it can actually benefit the consumer. I indicated that an unfair business would come to practise to the business's advantage, so again, I think it's very important that the consumer have the advantage of having informed choices and making those informed choices on information that should be incumbent upon the business to provide.

I would just like to congratulate the member for Essex South on his bill and commend him on all his hard work on behalf of Ontario consumers. I am sure that all members of the House will look at this as a way for us to help the consumer in terms of their purchasing.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to stand on behalf of my party, the New Democratic Party of Ontario, in support of this private member's resolution brought forward by Mr Crozier, Bill 83. I'd like, in the time that I have, to try to explain as well as I can what the bill is about and the rationale for supporting it.

Simply put, it's in order to try to deal with the problem we have in this province of negative option billing. Simply put, those are situations where a marketing firm of one type or another says, "I will send you goods through the mail," or, "I will sell you services through the mail," whatever they might be, and in the delivery of the goods or services a piece of paper comes to your door and says, "If you don't respond within a certain number of days, we're going to bill you for this," so you've got to send it back.

I have seen in my constituency, I'm sure as other members of this assembly have seen in the work that they do as constituency people in their own ridings, a number of people in my riding — in particular, in the town of Iroquois Falls I remember one issue specifically where the person wasn't aware — basically it was services that were being brought in in regard to lawn care. The person was sort of told that if they allowed that to happen it was a demonstration and they were going to show it to other people and she would be like the model for the neighbourhood. She said, "Yes, sure, go ahead and do it," type of thing, and what she ended up doing was getting into a contract where the person who wanted to do the work did it over a longer period of time than she ever wanted to do it and she had a real problem trying to undo the damage that had been done.

The problem, quite frankly, is that in the Consumer Protection Act now services are not included in that negative option portion. You can, under the law of Ontario, return goods; that's fairly easy to do. As long as you turn the goods back, there's nothing that they can do. They can't force you to keep the goods or pay for them. But when it comes to services, it's a real problem.

I have another situation. Mr Crozier talks about insurance. Another constituent about a month ago contacted my office about a similar thing. This elderly couple received a letter in the mail saying basically they had this free insurance policy, the same thing that happened to Mr Crozier himself. They thought: "Geez, this is free. I don't have to do anything. If somebody's going to give me something for free, I may as well keep it," not knowing what was going to happen. A little bit later they got a bill. Again, we're trying to work through the process of undoing the damage that was done there.

It wasn't a huge amount of money. It was a monthly policy — if I remember the numbers correctly, around \$32 a month — but none the less it's not something this particular couple wanted. They already had life insurance; they didn't need any other protection for funeral expenses; they didn't need extra protection for passing on any kind of money to their family. They had taken care of those matters quite a long time before they ever got the letter from the insurance company, but none the less, because the constituent had received it and because the constituent hadn't sent it back, they were stuck with a bill that we're now trying to work our way through to make sure that particular constituent doesn't have to pay.

Unlike what the Conservative member for Durham Centre said, which is that the legislation is flawed, I don't think it's flawed. I think it's fairly clear. If you take a look at what the bill is saying, it's trying to deal with the question of services.

I'm just going to read for the members here, because I always think it's important that when we come in and debate bills we should take the time to read the bill. I am always amazed in debate how many times members of this assembly get up and speak on bills and they haven't even taken the time to read them. I just want to read very quickly in section 1 of the bill what he's getting at. It deals with the definition of unsolicited goods, and the definition goes on to say "personal property or services supplied under a contract in writing to which the recipient is a party that provides for periodical supply of personal property or services to the recipient without further solicitation."

All right? I think it's fairly clear what they're trying to do here. We're trying to get to the question of how we deal with services themselves. I think it's a step in the right direction. I think it's something that quite frankly needs to be done. I think the government has the opportunity here to deal with one particular aspect of trying to protect consumers from unscrupulous business practices carried on by some of the companies in Ontario — not all. I believe that most companies try to do business in an honest way; in some cases not. This is what this bill is trying to do.

For the member for Durham Centre from the Conservative side of the bench, who said, "I'm going to support this in principle but I want to tell you how flawed it is," listen, you're the government. You guys are the ones who have the ministers' offices. You control the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. If you are so concerned about all those other issues that you raised, the honourable member for Durham Centre, where's the action? When is the minister going to come forward with

the legislation to deal with all those other issues that you tend to be concerned about this morning in debate?

You control the Cabinet Office, you control the minister's office, you control the legislation in the House; you have a huge majority in this House. So you have an opportunity to come forward and bring legislation to the table of this House, to the floor of this House, that will deal with your concerns.

1030

What the member opposite from the Liberal Party, Mr Crozier, is trying to say is, "Here is but one aspect of a problem." As a concerned member, the member is saying, "I want to be able to try to advocate on behalf of my constituents and other constituents around the province of Ontario around a particular aspect of consumer protection." I urge the members on the Conservative side of the bench to support this legislation, but not only support it by voting for it at second reading and allowing it to get through the House at this particular point, but I urge you then to go back and to work with the member opposite to lobby your members in the cabinet and lobby your House leader to make sure that the bill doesn't die after second reading.

It's not a big deal; it is not a cumbersome bill, as the member opposite would say. I've dealt with legislation in this House for a number of years and I think this is pretty clear-cut. It was drawn up by legislative counsel. They're the people who write bills. That's what we pay these people for. So for the member opposite to say it's cumbersome I think doesn't bode well to your confidence in the people who work at legislative counsel. These are the same people who write bills for the government, I would add. The thing is, it is not a flawed piece of legislation, so I ask the members to support it.

Again I say go to your cabinet colleagues, go to the cabinet members and say: "Listen, this is a good piece of legislation. I can go back home and I can tell constituents I have dealt with in my riding who have problems like this that the government is doing something about this particular issue." Make sure that the bill not only goes through second reading but goes through the entire process of becoming law.

Then take it one step further. The member for Durham Centre makes a point, and I think it's a valid point. There are a number of issues when it comes to consumer protection legislation that need to be dealt with. As I said before, you're the government. You control this House. You have the majority. Please come forward with legislation in order to deal with that. I will tell you, we on the opposition side of the bench will support you, because I believe the job of an opposition member, as a government member, is to speak out on behalf of their constituents. Where there are areas that we can agree on that are mutually beneficial for our constituents, I think it should transcend party politics.

I think it has to go, quite frankly, to the term you use, which is common sense. I will say now publicly here in the House, you come forward with consumer protection legislation that does some of the things the member for Durham Centre talked about in his speech today, and I will be there with you. I will vote for the bill. I will go out on the streets of the riding of Cochrane South and I

will make sure the constituents know what it's about, and I will give you credit where credit is due. But until you do so, I ain't going to do that, because quite frankly I think the member is trying to find some reason to tell the members on the Conservative side of the bench not to vote for this legislation. So you need to make sure that is done.

With that, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to debate this part of the bill and again I would urge members in this House to vote in support of the bill from the member for Essex South, because I think it goes a long way to addressing a lot of the issues that we talked about here this morning.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure this morning to rise and participate in the second reading of Bill 83, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, and the comments made by the member for Essex South in opening this important debate on the subject of protecting consumers.

I want to draw to the members' attention that the previous speaker, the NDP member for Cochrane South, spent most of his time offering nothing but criticism about the government and its action. At the end of the day, it's this government that's really in the position to make the final decision and vote to support this bill.

I might point out that during his lengthy diatribe, the member did not at any point mention the private member's bill by a member at that time, Cam Jackson's Bill 206. What did the NDP government do at that time? They had the opportunity as government of the day to move forward with significant changes to consumer protection that were involved in Bill 206, a very comprehensive bill that Minister Jackson took the time to develop in 1994, and the government failed to act.

I want to support Mr Flaherty's comments, the member for Durham Centre, being a very distinguished lawyer from the Durham region, who has very significantly pointed out that the weakness in the bill is that it doesn't really in some areas go far enough. I'd like to suggest that this government really — our effort is to work to help the people on the ground, the people who are working and struggling every day to make a living in their lives. Just think, for example, of the busy working family getting unsolicited mail and businesses offering services that perhaps requires them to read and take some sort of action. Think of the senior citizen who perhaps is victimized by being uninformed in an unsolicited approach for a business or service; or the student. For example, my son just received an unsolicited card in the mail. He had his 18th birthday and, what do you know, he's got a Bell Calling Card and another card in the mail the very next day, unsolicited. Sometimes there's an action required not to pre-empt the service that's being offered.

Working on behalf of people, I think Mr Crozier's bill does add the word "service" to the section of the bill. I think it's a very popular bill. At this time, we are all aware of the federal bill, C-216, which amended the Broadcasting Act, dealing with cable services. This wasn't dealing with consumer protection specifically but more under the regulations of the CRTC.

I'll be supporting this bill, but I am still listening to the full discussion, and I'm looking forward to other members' statements. I really want to leave the one impression, that in today's interactive, Internet world, where you're signing on a system, the buyer has every responsibility to beware of what they're really signing on to buy.

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): I want to congratulate my colleague for his bill. I think Bill 83 is about fairness. I think as a government we have a responsibility to protect consumers and I think this bill protects consumers. As pointed out by the previous speaker, we have to protect especially seniors, people who don't have access to all governmental information. I think this bill will do this. The way some business people operate today in this province leaves us unsatisfied with some of the ways that are being used to entice people to sign contracts or to buy products without seeing them and also what we call the "fine print." I don't think every one of us in this House does read the fine print. I think Bill 83 protects the consumers.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: There's too much noise. I can't hear the speaker even though he's right close to me.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Oh, sorry, Ben.

Mr Grandmaitre: It's okay, you're welcome, David.

As I pointed out, I think these people are all talking together because they want to support this bill, and I congratulate them. I think it's a great piece of legislation and it's about time the government protects our consumers. Again, let's hope that the government members, as the previous speaker pointed out — that not only he but the rest of the Tory members or the Conservative members will support this bill.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to congratulate the member for Essex South for bringing this bill forward and remind folks out there that this is the time, in the very complicated and sophisticated workings of this place, when members of this House, on their own initiative, separated from their party affiliation or most political considerations, bring forward to all of us for consideration issues that sometimes come from constituents who come to their office and share some concern about some regulation or rule that's in place that isn't working for them. Sometimes it's a group of people that come forward and lay on the table of a member an issue that needs to be addressed, that just cries out for address.

That member spends a lot of time researching, working with counsel down here and putting the pieces together so that a piece of legislation can be brought before this House for the full consideration of all the members, and as I said, separated from their normal role of either protecting government or hammering government, to consider something that's in the interest of all of the people of a particular jurisdiction. I would suggest that this morning we have before us just such a bill.

1040

The member has obviously heard from his constituents, I'm sure has heard from others of his colleagues in this place re this question, has seen in the press over the last number of years actually some concern raised about this issue as various and sundry companies and enterprises

across Ontario and Canada look for newer and more creative ways to bilk people out of the money they work so hard to earn for products they see, on first blush, as perhaps quite attractive and something that might be helpful to them, but in the end, when they've had some time to think about it, find it's not exactly what it was presented to be.

So this morning as we consider this bill, first of all, it's important that all of the members of the House realize that this is in the interest of the common good of consumers out there and will lay the groundwork as well re a level playing field for business and industry as it works within a set of guidelines and rules that are hopefully fair to everybody. We know in the world we live in how creative new businesses can be and how sometimes they will stretch the envelope to hook somebody into buying a product or entering into a contract that has all kinds of long-term ramifications a person doesn't consider in the initial accepting of and using of, or even sometimes signing for, a particular service or good. I believe today the member is talking about expanding a set of regulations to consider the purchase of or entering into agreement around services as opposed to goods.

We know there are some very good players out there in the business community who are not trying to pull the wool over the eyes of people, who are not trying to foist something on people that they don't necessarily want, but all of us at one point in time or another have probably been stung or have had the potential to be stung by some corporation or company or fly-by-night outfit that will sometimes send you something in the mail with a whole lot of very attractive language and packaging. If you're not on your toes, if you're not somebody who reads a lot of that stuff, who has the time to read that, you can find yourself stuck in something you didn't intend to be stuck in. If we, as legislators in this jurisdiction, can put in place some framework within which all that happens, it will be helpful to everybody.

I also want to make the point that today in our society we have a lot of people out there who are still not as educated as perhaps they would like to be around how this kind of service offer works. We have, for example, a lot of senior citizens out there who, presented with an opportunity by a good salesman at the door, or a package that comes in the mail that looks particularly attractive, want to be cooperative, want to be seen to be helpful or can be convinced very easily that something would be particularly helpful to them. Then when they have a chance to sit down and have a look at that, or talk it over with their family members, or get the first bill in the mail re something they never expected to get billed for, they find that there is no way out, that they're stuck and that they're now having to pay money they sometimes don't have or can't afford.

The fact that the member for Windsor-Essex is bringing this forward for our consideration this morning is certainly a very positive and good opportunity for all of us to try to collectively get our heads around something that doesn't have any political consideration, doesn't have any consideration re whether we're protecting the government or fighting the government, but is doing something in the interest of the common good.

I'm certainly going to be supporting it. I'm going to be listening intently to comments from others who will stand and speak on this. I want to again say thanks to the member for Windsor-Essex for bringing this forward and suggest that other members of the House give it full and due consideration because it is indeed in the best interests of all of us, our family members and our neighbours to do that.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to enter into the debate on the bill introduced by the member for Essex South. I think all of us in this House support the protection of the consumer. I assume this bill is similar to the private member's bill in the federal House of Commons, which I believe is close to proclamation, that was designed to protect people from the cable television services that were foisted on innocent people. People ended up paying for services they didn't even know they were getting. That was the design of that, and there may be other areas of services that we will need clarification on.

I hope this bill passes and goes to committee. I think it's worthwhile spending some more time on it in committee and listening to some expert authority on the legal implications of what's federal and what's provincial, because the federal bill may be designed to apply to some of the services the member for Essex South is speaking of.

I compliment him for bringing it forward. We all appreciate the 48-hour rule. Not to downplay door-to-door salesmen, but some of them are pretty good, particularly with seniors, in selling services and goods that people may not necessarily want or need. We all have members of our families or friends with whom that has taken place. The 48-hour rule and the current section 36 provide the protection with respect to goods but not services, which is essentially what this section is doing.

As the member for Essex South has pointed out, Bill 83 adds to section 36 the word "services" so that if a supplier provides to any person — and that's not limited to consumers — unsolicited services without a contractual agreement permitting such an arrangement, the recipient of the unsolicited services cannot be sued by the supplier, nor does the recipient have any legal obligation to pay for said services. I think all the speakers who have spoken today agree generally with that principle, and I hope the bill carries.

I'm not going to repeat the comments made by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the member for Durham Centre, Mr Flaherty. He outlined some of the legal pitfalls, and we want to make sure that if this legislation carries on to the future we're not going to be creating more legal problems. I took the time this morning, as a matter of fact, to look up in the Ontario Citor what sort of cases had reported decisions on this section. There aren't very many with respect to the Consumer Protection Act, but listening to the gist of the legal argument put forward by Mr Flaherty, the member for Durham Centre, there are some concerns that this legislation may result in unwanted litigation.

The issue of insurance has been mentioned, by the member for Essex South and others. I don't know whether that's option marketing or not. I do know that

one has to be cautious about making this amendment. For example, it is my understanding that if one purchases insurance of any sort and you fail to pay the insurance premiums, the insurance coverage continues for a period of time. I would want to make sure, in listening to the legal counsel who come to the committee, that it's not the intent that the minute the policy expires that's the end of the policy. I hope that's not the intent of the member for Essex South, because it's going to cause problems. Certainly consumers in that particular case benefit from automatic contract renewal by not allowing policies to accidentally lapse. I would want to hear more comments from the legal people whether or not this amendment will cause problems with that situation.

1050

We hear stories where insurance companies add unsolicited coverage, whether it be travel or medical insurance, to a homeowner's policy without discussing it with the client and I believe the member's amendment would cover that situation, because clearly that hasn't been explained, that has not been solicited; it's just unilaterally put in the policy by the insurance company.

We have now got into all the services that are provided by cable television. You'll be able to press a menu and find out you can order goods from the store through television. There is the whole issue of telemarketing via computers. I assume all of that is covered by the federal legislation, but if there are other areas, as I say, we'll need more expert comments to determine that in which case I fully support in principle what Mr Crozier, the member for Essex South, is trying to do.

I too hope this piece of legislation will go to committee, to further protect the consumer. I hope that in the time remaining the member for Essex South will give us some more examples of what he means by services. He gave the one which came to his family, although I think I knew about it, but I'd like to know some more examples about what the intent of his bill is.

The only hesitation I have is that this may overlap with federal jurisdiction and we're going to get into more litigation as to what's constitutional and what isn't constitutional. I hope that in the time remaining he would get into specifically what services the bill is intended to apply to provincially.

I echo the comments of all the members of this House. I believe this bill should go to committee because the intent of the bill clearly is to protect the innocent consumer of this province and I too intend to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Applause.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I don't know, David, whether that applause was for me or for your speech. I'll say it's for the speech by the member for Dufferin-Peel who, I think, makes some good points. I'm pleased to see he's supporting the bill. I think he's right when he says it should go to committee so we can have the appropriate input as it progresses through the system.

This is the issue that probably brings people from all political parties together. I want to pay tribute to Bruce Crozier, the member for Essex South, for taking the initiative to bring it forward as a bill this morning as his

private member's public business, because it's something that has arisen as a result of our constituents talking to us. Often people are frustrated. They will say to those who are in government or in opposition, to those of us who are in elected office: "We feel concern because we don't see our views reflected in legislation. We have certain issues that we think are important and parliaments or councils never tend to deal with those." That's not an accurate statement, but that's a feeling or an expression which is put forward.

This is one example. There isn't anybody here who doesn't recall the furore when the cable television industry got into this, where they were sending bills to people and people really hadn't asked for the services that were being provided. There was a groundswell of negative comment about this to such an extent that the president or vice-president of one of the major companies got up and had a press conference. I must say that as an example of a person admitting his company was wrong in what he had done, I thought it was an excellent press conference. I thought the person put forward a rather good argument for what the company had intended, but also indicated that he was going to respond on behalf of his company to the consumer complaints that were out there. I think the public felt somewhat empowered by this, and justifiably so, because they saw it as someone imposing services on them that they didn't want.

Mr Crozier, the Liberal member for Essex South, has also raised the issue of insurance in this House, automobile insurance in this case. There's a debate out there of whether that is negative option billing. He has raised the concern he has heard from constituents and others in the province that people have to indicate they don't want a certain service or a certain component of an insurance policy or they end up getting it.

I think the consumer out there is an educated consumer, is an informed consumer today, with all the material and all the choices available to consumers, and I think the consumer would like to make that choice. If the company trying to put forward a product or service has a good product and service, one that's popular, one that's desired, one that's wanted by the consumer, then I think the consumer will make that purchase of that service or product, but to impose it on the person, to have the person go through the procedure of having to say no rather than say yes is a backwards way of doing things.

We must look at some of the situations that face people. People in their lives have a lot of things going on. They may have a personal crisis, there may be a health crisis, a person may be away for a period of time in another province or another country, and an invoice shows up at the house saying that they are going to get the following services. Those people often aren't able to act upon that. Even the people who are able to act upon it get annoyed because they have to take the step of saying they don't want the product or service, but if they are incapable of doing so because they're ill, because there's a crisis of some kind they're facing, because they happen to be very busy at work or, as I've mentioned, in another location, that can cost the person money and a lot of inconvenience.

What is at issue here, as the member for Essex South has pointed out, is the issue of fairness. I think this transcends partisan considerations, and that's always good on the Thursday morning, because we try to look at members bringing forward their favourite issues in a relatively non-partisan fashion, and I want to commend the member for doing that.

It's also fairness to businesses. I remember I made this argument in the Ministry of the Environment, that when you start cutting back on the requirements for companies, what happens is the good companies that have made the purchase of equipment, that have trained the employees, that are being good corporate citizens, are penalized when you weaken the system for somebody else. I think it's applicable in this case. There are companies that use positive advertising to try to persuade people to buy their product and then they invite people to say yes rather than to cancel a particular service. That's as it should be, and those businesses are placed at a disadvantage when others use the negative option billing system.

Bill 83 puts consumers first. It's up to business to market their product positively and many people do that very well and have people within their organizations who do it well. The complexity of a product or service is no excuse for a failure to give consumers a positive option. I think when that argument is made, it's rather condescending to consumers, whether in our jurisdiction or other jurisdictions.

Bill 83 recognizes that the Consumer Protection Act must be updated to reflect the realities of the new economy — we accept that — an economy that is becoming increasingly based on a transaction of services as well as goods. It addresses a long overdue prohibition on a marketing technique that I think it's safe to say is a severe irritant to consumers in this province.

Bill 83 is not going to break new ground. Other provinces have already moved on this: British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia. New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are also considering such consumer protection amendments.

In concluding my remarks, one of the issues I received the most on in the way of mail and telephone calls was certainly the issue of negative option billing. We as a Legislature, as legislators, have an opportunity to rectify that situation and I urge people to support the member for Essex South and his legislation.

1100

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Essex South has two minutes to respond.

Mr Crozier: I appreciate very much the comments of my colleagues. The debate has enlightened even me on this subject, particularly from the parliamentary assistant, the member for Durham Centre. I say in a lighter vein, the amendments I'm proposing were drawn up by a lawyer and I'm just a bean counter, an accountant, so I appreciate his comments and I would appreciate his input, quite frankly.

Mr Flaherty: In a lighter vein.

Mr Crozier: In a lighter vein; I said that.

To the member for Dufferin-Peel, you asked for some examples. If this bill passes and goes to committee, we could certainly discuss these in more detail as they may

be applicable to our act and to amendments that are required, but in the case of alarm companies, for example, some companies had introduced new charges as part of an ongoing contract for alarm services without having first alerted subscribers to the charges or obtained their consent. In some areas, a service is defined to include the delivery or provision of access to even electricity, gas and water and other telecommunications. So that, I agree, has to be clarified as to the extent that it's a federal and/or provincial matter.

In the area of insurance: adding travel insurance coverage to homeowners' policies without express authorization of the consumer and without having first advised the consumer of the details of the coverage. There have been examples in the area of home care, window cleaning, chimney services. The list does go on. I think it needs some discussion.

I certainly appreciate the criticism and I think, as any bill that's put before us, it certainly could use the discussion of the Legislature and I would hope that you support it and that it will go to committee for discussion.

HEALTH CARE RESTRUCTURING

Ms Martel moved private member's notice of motion number 27:

That in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health should reject the current Sudbury Health Services Restructuring Report as it imposes a solution not reflective of the local solution agreed to by the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Health Council; cuts over 200 acute beds from the Sudbury hospital system; puts Sudbury's ability to act as a regional medical referral centre at risk; will result in significant job losses of front-line health care staff, which will negatively affect hospital services; and does not guarantee 100% reinvestment of savings in the Sudbury community as promised by the previous Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): On your resolution, would you like to lead off debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Yes, I would, Mr Speaker. I am moving this resolution today because I am firmly convinced that we are heading for a health care crisis in my community. We're heading for a crisis for three reasons: firstly and most importantly because this Conservative government has broken a significant promise that it made to the electorate, both in the Common Sense Revolution and then again during the election campaign, and that was that there would be no cuts to health care. But the fact of the matter is, in his effort to try and help finance the tax cut that's going to make those people who have the most in Ontario get even more, this Minister of Health has already announced \$1.3-billion worth of cuts to hospitals in this province over the next three years. Those cuts — the cuts in beds, the cuts in staff and the cuts in services — are going to have a tremendously negative impact in my community.

The second reason we're heading for a crisis is that the person who should be responsible for this restructuring is so busy trying to hide behind his Conservative-appointed restructuring commission and trying to let them do the dirty work for him that no one in our community is quite

sure who at the end of the day is going to make this important decision in our community. When the Minister of Health sat on this side, he always condemned our ministers of health, made sure that they were responsible for everything that went on in the system, blamed them on occasion even for the deaths that occurred in the health care system. Now we have a minister who spends his time trying to say that the commission that he has appointed is arm's length, even though it is completely unaccountable to anyone in this assembly, completely unaccountable to our community, and it should be he and he alone who accepts responsibility for the cuts and the impact those cuts are having, not only in my community but in many others across the province.

The third reason we're heading for a crisis is because the decision that has been made by this non-elected, non-accountable commission in my community is going to result in much poorer health care in my community. Members in this assembly should know that under our government the restructuring committee that was established worked for two and a half years to put together a local solution. That committee was made up of people who live and work in my community, not people who were flown in from Toronto to impose a solution on our community.

The minister rejected that solution, a solution that had been agreed to by the district health council, and instead he sends in his folks from Toronto who meet with 15 pre-selected groups behind closed doors and then scuttle off to Toronto and make a decision that does not reflect the work that was done for two and a half years by people who live and work in our community. That's shameful. That's wrong. Now we're going to have imposed upon us a made-in-Toronto solution, which will not make things better in my community.

What has this Conservative-appointed commission left us? They've decided to close 206 acute care beds in our community. That decision stems directly from the decision made by this minister to cut \$1.3 billion out of the hospital system. The former restructuring committee that worked under our minister worked with a bed count that was 200 beds higher than what this commission has come forward with. This commission, when they came to town and met behind closed doors, told the groups that the bed configuration was now much smaller, and it's much smaller because this minister has made a \$1.3-billion cut.

We already know that one of the hospitals has taken a good hard look at the numbers and disagrees with the commission fundamentally. One of the hospitals makes it clear that just in order to continue to provide the services that are now provided in our community we need at least 80 more beds. So the commission has it all wrong. We already have people calling us who can't get in or who had their surgery cancelled because there are not enough beds. Someone from the government has to tell me how, by cutting 206 more acute care beds in our community, things are going to improve.

The commission has left us in a vulnerable position. I think it's going to be impossible for Sudbury to continue to operate as a regional medical referral centre. Eighteen percent of the people who use the hospitals in our community come from outside the regional municipality

of Sudbury. They come to our community for cancer and cardiac care. If these patients cannot come to our community any longer because there are not enough acute care beds, because there are not enough staff and because we can't provide the same level of service as we do now, the choice for those people is to be referred to somewhere in southern Ontario. This is not acceptable. People in our community from all walks of life have worked long and hard to make sure that Sudbury had the services necessary to help our neighbours elsewhere in north-eastern Ontario. We will not accept having northerners flown to southern Ontario to get the care they need because this minister is gutting the system in our community.

The commission has also left us with a significant loss of front-line workers, and that's going to impact on services. I read through the report that the commission put out and it's full of graphs and data and charts and statistics on every conceivable item except probably the most important one, and that is, how many front-line workers are going to lose their jobs. It is inconceivable to me that the commission could put all this kind of information in the report, could close two out of the three hospitals, could cut 206 acute care beds, and could not tell the public in our community how many front-line workers are going to lose their jobs. That is unacceptable, and it shows just how ridiculous the whole process is and how much this process is driven, not to protect health care or make it better, but to cut costs to finance the tax cut of this government.

When you close two of the three hospitals in my community, when you cut 206 acute care beds, you are going to send hundreds and hundreds of front-line health care workers out the door, and that will have an impact on patient care, that will have an impact on the services that we're going to be able to continue to deliver, and that will have a tremendously negative impact on the local economy of Sudbury, because we have tried for many years now to balance public sector employment with our traditional dependence on the mining sector. It is unacceptable that this commission, which works and operates on behalf of this government, cannot tell the people in my community how many front-line hospital workers are going to lose their jobs.

1110

The fourth point: The commission has recommended that only one third of the savings it thinks might be achieved is to be returned to our community. That's about \$13.4 million. It's interesting to note that the minister says all the closures that are recommended by the commission are binding on communities, but he will make the decision of how much money will be reinvested in communities. It's interesting when he assumes responsibility under this process.

Compare a recommendation to return one third of the savings to our community with the guarantee that was made by our Minister of Health, Ruth Grier, that 100% of the savings to be achieved through restructuring in Sudbury would be returned to our community, to be invested in the community-based care and supports that we need in our community. There is no commitment by this minister to reinvestment in our community. We have

asked in this House what the level of that reinvestment will be. He has not answered. My fear is that this minister will take \$42 million out of our community on an annual basis. It will not be returned to this community. It will be used instead to help finance the big tax cut that's going to make those who have the most in our society get even more. That is completely unacceptable to the people in our community.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I believe my community is heading for a crisis in health care. We are heading there because of the cuts this government has made, contrary to all the promises made during the election campaign and in the Common Sense Revolution that there would be no cuts to health care.

We're heading for a crisis because the Minister of Health tries to hide behind his Conservative-appointed commission and let it do the dirty work of closing hospitals while he throws up his hands and says: "They operate at arm's length. I have nothing to do with it. I'm not going to interfere in this process." At the same time he says that he, however, will have responsibility to determine how much of the saving will return to the community.

We are heading for a crisis in our community because the decision that has come down from this Conservative-appointed commission leaves us with 206 fewer acute care beds, two of our three hospitals closed, hundreds of front-line health care workers going out the door and services that will not be delivered, which will put at risk our ability to act as a regional medical centre.

I call on this government today to urge the Minister of Health not to accept the current proposal that is put out by the restructuring commission, because it will leave health care in Sudbury much worse than it is now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): It's a pleasure to join in the debate today. It's much the same debate we had yesterday on opposition day, as you're aware. I'd like to talk for a few minutes about some of the comments the member opposite made.

As she is well aware, the health care budget in Ontario has not been cut by this government. I don't know how many times and in what different ways we have to say it, but when we came into power, the budget in health care was \$17.4 billion. After our first year the amount of money we had spent on health care was \$17.7 billion, an increase of \$300 million. I think it's very important for the opposition to at least speak within the facts of the case, which are proven by the financial statements. We have not cut health care spending. We have restructured within the system and reallocated dollars back into the system.

She then went on to speak about cuts to hospitals. I would like to remind the members of the House that the Ontario Hospital Association in the past has been daunted every year by cuts to the system. When we came into power, they asked us to go out three years so they would be able to plan and manage the system better than they had in the past, that they were short of strategic planning that was only one year long. So we went out three years and said, "These will be the cuts over the next three years." We have talked about the first year and we're

looking at the second and third years for specific differences based on geographic size. But in effect we have said there will be changes in the budget and we have given them an ability to manage their system within that period.

Yesterday I went through the restructuring commission because both opposition parties talk about the restructuring commission as if these people have no expertise. "They're out to destroy the health care system and they don't give a darn about what's going to happen."

If we look at the restructuring commission, we see that each of those individuals is highly qualified in the area of health care. We have the dean of a medical school at Queen's University; we have the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association; we have people who have worked their entire lives in health care and are concerned about the health care costs. They are not all from Toronto. They are from across Ontario and are all highly qualified individuals who can help us to provide the people and patients in Ontario with the best health care system we can get.

As the member well knows, restructuring is important because in the long run we need to make reinvestments into the health care system. It is truly just not working at this point. We have long waiting lists that affect the quality of health care for people in Ontario. We have people who want to make significant contributions to health care and are unable to as a result of the way the system works now. We have to change the system to make it better for the people in Ontario.

Everybody, all three parties, recognize that. They're all on record as saying that. The Ontario Hospital Association recognizes it. David Martin, in his speech to the Empire Club, which I quoted yesterday, said: "Some look at our system and see how much has been accomplished in terms of restructuring in the past few years. I look at it, and I see how much more" needs to be accomplished.

The nurses are on record, in their vision statement, saying there needs to be change to the health care system. We need a far better integrated health care system which takes into effect the community, which deals with all the things from birth to death, within the system. They say that system has to be much more integrated.

David Naylor, who is the head of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences of Ontario and a special adviser to the restructuring commission, has said: "The winners must be our fellow citizens, both as patients and taxpayers. If action isn't quick, the losers will be the next generation." You can see that a number of people, both inside and outside the House, believe that restructuring has to happen.

I'm the first to admit it's difficult in every area that the restructuring comes about, but Ontario is the last province to enter restructuring. In Saskatchewan the NDP government, I might add, has closed approximately half their hospitals. In Manitoba, studies have shown that there is no evidence that there's been a reduction in services with bed closures. There were more patients being cared for in Winnipeg in 1993 than in 1990, despite considerable reductions in beds. Days that patients spend in the hospital are decreasing. The days per 1,000 residents dropped by 9%. There was no noticeable decrease in

access to hospitals for paediatric patients, nor Winnipeg patients, nor patients in the outlying area, which is what the member opposite was talking about. We service such a wider area. In Manitoba there was no decrease in access to hospitals for people outside the urban area. There is no evidence to support what the member said.

1120

She talks very highly of Ruth Grier, the Minister of Health at that time, saying that she would have put all the investments back into the community. I happen to have the quote from her speech delivered in Windsor on June 11, 1993, which says: "Let me address the crucial matter of what happens to the savings achieved in hospital reconfiguration...If the savings from your system reconfiguration exceed the needs identified in your community-based plan; that is, if" —

Ms Martel: What did she say in Sudbury? I am not talking about Windsor; I am talking about Sudbury.

Mrs Johns: If you'll just give me a minute, I'd be happy to tell you what she said — "that is, if your savings compounded to the extent that Windsor has an integrated spectrum of community-based services and still has savings over and above its plan needs, of course the taxpayers of Ontario will then also get a return on their investment in Windsor, to be used" —

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): We are talking about Sudbury. Someone give that woman a wakeup call.

The Acting Speaker: There's too much noise in here. Everyone will have their chance to debate. Set it up with your House leader and we'll do it in an organized way, please.

Mrs Johns: As Minister Grier was saying, these reinvestments will go into "other communities who are far behind." So even in your government you were saying that this was going to happen. I am sure that Ruth Grier would not treat one community differently from another community in Ontario. We're elected to rule equally and fairly throughout the province of Ontario.

I would like to end by saying that restructuring is a difficult process; we're aware of that. What is important is that we have quality health care in the province of Ontario. To do that we have to put more money into a number of areas that my colleague the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay is going to speak about.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's a privilege to get up and respond to the resolution. I will be supporting the resolution as it is in part very similar to what was presented yesterday in debate, and as I supported it yesterday I will support today.

But let me tell you, I don't want to talk about Manitoba, I don't want to talk about a former Minister of Health, I don't want to talk about anything except Sudbury and the effects of this report on the community of Sudbury. I wish the members across the way would understand that when this restructuring commission visits your community it is talking solely about your community. To base it on the Manitoba model or the Alberta model or the British Columbia model or what happened 10 years ago is all gobbledegook. It is a devastation of the health care services in the region of Sudbury and in northeastern Ontario.

If you simply look at the size of the system we're left with — and I want the members across the way to understand the seriousness and the significance of the size of our system — we're left with an acute care bed size that numbers 365, down from 571. If you look at Sudbury as a northeastern referral centre, it is impossible for us to fulfil the mandate that's given to the region of Sudbury as a referral centre. If you look at only 100 chronic care beds, that's not enough to fulfil the mandate as a referral centre for northeastern Ontario. If you look at only 31 mental health beds, you're looking at a system that's not big enough to act as a referral centre for northeastern Ontario. If you're looking at 31 rehab beds, you're looking at a system that isn't big enough to suit the needs of northeastern Ontario. There's no provision for transitional or repatriated beds that will make the system big enough to be the referral centre for northeastern Ontario.

Statistics prove — and these statistics were given to the Health Services Restructuring Commission — that last year 35,556 patient days were designated as repatriated bed days, which were designated as referral centre days. That amounts to 100 transitional or repatriated beds. The amount of money they're pouring into the new system is only \$3.2 million, which will only allow for between 16 and 20 repatriated beds. Clearly, that statistic alone should tell you that the system isn't big enough.

The model that the community had agreed upon was a two-site acute care system: a hot site and a warm site. That took place after two and a half years of pretty intense negotiation, discussion, give and take on both sides. The entire community was involved in the process. Do you know what? Although it wasn't pleasing to everyone, it was a local solution that everybody bought into. The community was concerned that there be an option that everybody could buy into. We got it. Not everyone was happy, but it was a local solution to our local health care services.

This commission came in, didn't give that report the time of day, didn't listen to what the Minister of Health said when on January 17, in a letter to health care providers, he indicated his support by saying: "My ministry has already accepted the DHC recommendations regarding clinical programs, support services and sitings, as identified in the hospital services review report. Consideration of any other siting model is not acceptable." They didn't even listen to the minister. They didn't listen to the Premier when the Premier made a commitment to the Catholic community that he would protect the denominational religious factors of hospital health care. They didn't listen to that. More importantly, the commission obviously didn't listen to the community because 83% of the community say that there's going to be a deterioration of the system.

It's not only people who are politicians or teachers or lawyers. We're talking about doctors, nurses, lab technicians. We're talking about those providers of the services saying the system is too small. I ask you, in all honesty and in all good conscience, to support the resolution of the member for Sudbury East. It makes perfect sense.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent of the

House for my friend the member for Nickel Belt to explain why he closed 8,400 hospital beds in the last government.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Laughren: It is certainly true that our government, between 1990 and 1995, for the first time brought health care spending under control. We did it in a rational, humane way, not the way this government is attempting to do it.

I must tell you that when I hear the Tory backbenchers saying that there's nothing wrong with what they're doing in health care, I wonder if they've talked to the member for Bruce. The member for Bruce could tell you a few stories about concern about health care in her riding. How many people were out to a meeting in Warton? Was it 3,000 people expressing concern about what you're doing to health care in that part of the province?

I mean, for the member for Huron to get up and say to the member for Sudbury East that our government did not make a commitment to Sudbury to reinvest savings is a complete fabrication, a complete and absolute fabrication, and then to say, "Here's what she said about Windsor," either the member for Huron doesn't know where Windsor and Sudbury are in the province or she's deliberately trying to mislead the House and the rest of the province who are watching into believing that —

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to withdraw that remark about misleading the House, please.

Mr Laughren: I'll withdraw it even though it's not out of order the way I put it. I will withdraw in respect for the Chair.

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: It's not out of order. You can rule all you like; it's not out of order. But I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I did not rule that it was a point of order; I said that it was unparliamentary. I asked you to, and that's my reason. Thank you.

Mr Laughren: You are not going to cut into my time any more, Mr Speaker. I've had it with you.

I must say that for the member for Huron to say or to imply that no such commitment was made to Sudbury is fundamentally wrong. It's a fabrication. We have it in writing. We know. We were there and the Minister of Health assured the people in Sudbury that any savings achieved would be reinvested in the community. That's not what the present Minister of Health is saying.

That's not what the commission has the power to enforce. The commission only has the power to enforce the closures, not any kind of reinvestment in the community, not any kind of labour adjustment for people who will lose their jobs who work in those hospitals now. No such thing was forthcoming from the commission.

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For the member for Huron to stand in her place and say that all the members of the commission were experts in the health care field is a joke, an absolute joke. People are laughing at you when you make statements like that. Don't try to kid the troops any more that you're not dismantling the health care system in this province, because you surely are, and your backbenchers are hearing about it from their constituents. Ask the member

for Bruce what she's hearing from her constituents in her constituency about what your intentions are. Talk to some of your backbenchers over there; they'll tell you.

And do you know what? For the first time since you were elected in June 1995, your policies are starting to hit the ground and hit people, and it's starting to come back and get at you. For the first time, that's what's happening.

The people in this province did not believe that they voted for a reform agenda in health care. They thought, when they heard Mike Harris say he would not cut a nickel from health care spending, that he was telling the truth. That's what the people of the province thought. They thought Mike Harris was telling the truth when he said there would not be a nickel cut from health care spending. Well, the people of this province are thinking that one through, I can tell you that, because they see what's happening all across this province in health care and they know you are dismantling the health care system as we've known it.

Nobody disagrees that there needs to be restructuring of the hospital system. Everyone agrees to that. I personally support some of the restructuring that's going on, but the way you're doing it really is grossly unfair. It is lacking in courage, because the minister won't stand up and say, "This is what we're doing." He looks at these appointed Tories on his commission and says, "Well, they decided to close the hospital, not me." What kind of joke is that?

Surely as political people in this province, you've got to have the courage of your convictions and stand up and say, "I've decided to close two hospitals in Sudbury," or "I've decided to close so many hospitals in Ottawa or in Toronto." No, no, that's not what you're doing. For heaven's sake, most of you are proud of your ideology. Why don't you stand up and wear it then? Instead of that, you hide behind a commission that you give authority to close hospitals. Why don't you do it yourself? Don't you have the courage of your own convictions? That's one thing I always thought Tories had. I might have some disagreements with you from time to time, but I always thought you had the courage of your convictions to stand up and state what you believed in and carried through on it. In this case, you're hiding behind a Tory-appointed commission.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to the motion presented by the member for Sudbury East. This motion deals directly with the recently released Sudbury Health Services Restructuring Report. As the member will know, there is still a 30-day response period for public feedback on the report.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission is an arm's-length body, and in my opinion it would not be appropriate to discuss the specific recommendations for Sudbury. However, I would like to speak to the larger issue of restructuring within the health services field in the province of Ontario.

The resolution put forward by the member questions the government's commitment to health care services and promised reinvestments. As my colleagues have clearly

stated both yesterday and today — but it bears repeating — there have been no provincial cuts to health care funding. Our government has committed to a level of health care spending that will not fall below \$17.4 billion. With this year's health care budget at \$17.7 billion, we've exceeded our commitment by some \$300 million.

The resolution would have us believe that restructuring cannot possibly increase the quality of health care in the province, but we've heard over and over again that restructuring is necessary. The Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Nurses' Association and others are in agreement that restructuring is needed to ensure high-quality patient care.

This resolution is a call for maintaining the status quo, but we know the status quo is unacceptable. Under previous governments, approximately 8,400 beds were eliminated. That is the equivalent of 33 midsized hospitals. However, no wings or buildings were ever closed. We're still paying for the heat and hydro for those empty wings and buildings. As a result, high administration costs are not allowing dollars to flow directly to patient care.

With the introduction of the arm's-length Health Services Restructuring Commission, we've taken the politics out of health care. In the past, previous governments have recognized politics as an impediment to any restructuring efforts. In order to address this barrier to change, we appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission to ensure that all aspects of health care in the regions are taken into account before any recommendations are made. In Sudbury, the consultation process is ongoing. Only after reviewing all relevant material did the commission issue a set of recommendations regarding the restructuring of local services. These recommendations pertain to the closure or creation of facilities, the need for reinvestments and anything else the commission deems will improve the quality of health care. As is currently under way in Sudbury, after the report is released, there's a 30-day period during which any member of the community or any organization, including affected hospitals, can forward their comments to the commission for consideration. Following this 30-day period, the commission considers all the feedback it's received and issues its final directives. At the end of the day, this is clearly a comprehensive, apolitical and productive process.

The resolution expresses concern for the impact restructuring will have on jobs, but ministry reinvestments in long-term care and community mental health are expected to create more than 4,400 new jobs for health professionals, including nurses.

This morning's resolution also criticizes the government for not reinvesting all the dollars saved from restructuring into the community on a dollar-for-dollar basis. If our goal is to create a province-wide health care system that provides seamless levels of care across all communities, then all communities must be able to share in the savings achieved.

The province's larger hospitals frequently serve patients who do not live in the surrounding community. For example, it's not unusual for patients from my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay to travel to Sudbury or other

large centres for various sorts of special treatments. As a result, I have a direct interest in ensuring patients in my community will continue to enjoy the services provided by the current health care network.

Through this critical restructuring effort and numerous front-line reinvestments, my constituents are discovering that access to some lifesaving services is being brought closer to home. As an example, two weeks ago I had the pleasure to join with the member for Parry Sound to launch a new dialysis unit in my riding at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital. The hospital will receive \$429,000 annually for operating costs and \$244,000 in a one-time fund for startup and training costs. In my community, this reinvestment means patients in the Muskoka-Parry Sound area will no longer have to make long trips to receive this life-giving treatment. Province-wide, the health minister has announced \$25 million in expansion of dialysis services.

Earlier this week, the Premier and the Minister of Health also announced another reinvestment in the expansion of breast screening services in the province. In my riding, South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge was chosen as one of 11 new sites which will begin participating in the program for detecting breast cancer. For women in my area, this means improved access. It means doctors will be able to identify and treat breast cancer more quickly.

This \$24.3-million reinvestment will mean an estimated 30 new screening programs for Ontario over the next four years. This reinvestment will see 325,000 more Ontario women being screened for breast cancer by the year 2000. That's an increase of 400% over the current capacity.

By restructuring, we're taking funding out of needless administration and costly overhead and reinvesting those resources into direct patient care. The dialysis and breast screening reinvestments are just two examples of expanded programs which are targeting health care funding into front-line, community-based patient care.

When we talk about restructuring, we're really talking about setting priorities. We're talking about providing the health services the people of the province feel they need and set as priorities. At the end of the day, restructuring is what is best for the health care of Ontarians. Restructuring will enhance patients' access to quality health care services and it will save and rejuvenate our system.

1140

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to participate in this debate today, although I must say that I really wish it wasn't necessary to have this motion before the House.

Health care is probably the most important item on the agenda of at least the people I represent. One of the things that I think all of us are asking in Algoma-Manitoulin, along the North Shore and in the rural north, is, where will we get services? Will the waiting lists be shorter? Will we be able to access quality health care in a timely fashion? As we look at this report, we're being asked to believe that 200 fewer acute care beds in Sudbury will be available for people who need them; 37% fewer. That is just totally unbelievable. No one

could believe that a quality system can be maintained with 37% fewer beds.

To put it into perspective, that means we're going from 20 operating rooms presently in the city to 12. It means that the number of beds set aside for people from outside of Sudbury for procedures in Sudbury hospitals is dropping from about 100 to somewhere between 16 and 20, an 80% decrease in available beds for a population that needs to come to Sudbury for specialized services. How stupid does this government believe us to be? This cannot possibly happen.

The most offensive statement that we're hearing is: "This is not political. We're taking the politics out of health care." I want to tell you, I had the privilege of being down in health estimates and Mr Kells, the member from Etobicoke something or other, said to the minister, "but I did bring up the point that when you say you take the politics out of something, it's not enough to say you take it out when, after all, it is there." Mr Kells says it is there.

We all know it's there. We look at the commission, look at what's happening. We know that politics is in health care. We know that the Conservative government has broken every commitment it has made to the people of Ontario with respect to health care and it is partisan. You can't hide behind a commission that comes into Sudbury and other communities and says, "No, no, it's not us; it's somebody else." You just won't be believed. You might as well own up to it and say, "It's our plan; we're going to do it." Don't hide behind the commission.

I also wanted to bring out that I think for the rural north, in fact, for Sault Ste Marie and Timmins and North Bay and other large centres, there's something in this report that I think should cause us all concern. It is a recommendation hidden away on page — it's recommendation number 14, advice to the Minister of Health. It says the minister will "Establish, in conjunction with the HSRC, by December 31, 1996, a planning committee comprised of representatives of the northeastern region of the province to do the following," listen to this:

"(a) Examine the options for integrated delivery system(s) in northeastern Ontario including a single governance model;

"(b) Evaluate the options and make recommendations by...June 30."

In other words, what this government wants to do is impose a regional health care system with one governance which affects every community in northeastern Ontario. It's found in a Sudbury report, not a Sault report, not a Timmins report, not a North Bay report, not a report about Manitoulin Island. It's found in a Sudbury report, hidden away on a back page. What they are going to do is bring the National Health Service of Great Britain to northern Ontario in the guise of a report from the commission that is only to deal with Sudbury. It is offensive. It is offensive to the people I represent. It will be offensive to everyone in northeastern Ontario that this is being snuck through.

The people I serve do not believe that this restructuring taking 37% out of the system is at all possible in order to achieve quality health care.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to say these few words.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): In the time that I've got, I just want to go through this quickly and talk about how it relates to the city of Timmins and to the good people of Cochrane South.

I first want to remind people of something. In the last election, the government ran on something that was called the Common Sense Revolution. We remember it well. I want to take a look at specifically what page 7 had to say in the Common Sense Revolution. "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important. And frankly, as we get older, we are going to need it more and more." They have failed on that promise. What have they done since they've come to office? They have cut funding to doctors, they've cut funding to hospitals, they've cut funding to long-term care, health care as a continuum has been cut day after day by the government, and they stand in this House and say they've got a commitment. They broke their most fundamental promise in the Common Sense Revolution.

Then they go on to say in the same document, "Every dollar we save by cutting overhead or by bringing in the best new management techniques and thinking, will be reinvested in health care." That's not what they're doing in Sudbury; that's not what they're going to be doing in Toronto; that's not what they're doing anywhere. They're taking the money that they cut in health care and they're doing what? They're using it to pay for their phoney tax scheme. That's what they're doing with the money they're taking from health care. It's to pay for the phoney tax scheme.

I want to tell you what it means to the people of Cochrane South. Here in Timmins, in Iroquois Falls and in Matheson, the people in that part of the province depend on Sudbury to refer patients who need assistance medically on to the Sudbury regional hospital system. Without that system, it means to say quite frankly that people are not going to be able to get in. We know that what you want to do in Sudbury is go from the current system of three hospitals, drop it down to one and cut 206 acute-care beds out of the system. What does that mean? It means to say that if you're in Schumacher, if you're in South Porcupine, if you're in Timmins, Matheson or Iroquois Falls and you need to get referred into Sudbury Memorial for a heart bypass, the list will get longer and longer and longer, to the point that you're not going to get in.

I listened to the debate earlier, and the members across the way said nothing happens, don't worry about it, everything's fine. I'm here to tell you not. We already have problems in the system. People up in my part of the province who are trying to get referred into Sudbury as it is are having a difficult time with what your government has done up to now, because of a number of issues concerning what's happening with doctors in this province, because of what's happening to hospitals in regard to their budgets last year with the 6% cut that you did, and in addition to other issues, it is getting more difficult for the people of my community to get referred into Sudbury Memorial for a heart bypass.

I want to tell you about one case alone: Richard Adams, a man who worked in Timmins for many years

in the assessment office in the riding in Timiskaming. He started developing problems last spring. As of last spring, his doctor was trying to refer him in for bypass surgery at Sudbury Memorial. Normally, in cases like that, if you're acute and you need to get in, they find you a bed and you get your bypass. Sometimes it's difficult, even when we were government. In this case, June went by, July went by, August went by, he couldn't get in. Do you know where he is now? He's buried in a cemetery, because he died. He couldn't get into Sudbury because a bed wasn't available and now Beverley is a widow, sitting in Cobalt without her husband.

Why? Because this Conservative government is more intent on driving home a phoney tax scheme and funding it through cuts in the health care system, and they have the gall to come into this House and to say that somehow we're trying to play politics with the health care system. It ain't politics. This is real people. I'll tell you, there are more and more cases in my community where people are coming to my constituency office who are saying: "Gilles, I need to get referred into Sudbury. My family doctor or my specialist in Timmins wants to get me down for bypass surgery and I can't get in."

I have another case that I'm dealing with. The man's been waiting for three months and he can't get in. He's now been told it'll take another three months for him to get his bypass. Why? Because you as a government have seen fit to try to fund a phoney tax scheme on the backs of the hardworking men and women in this province so that you're going in and you're cutting the health care system. I say to you, shame, because what you're doing, you are destroying our health care system and quite frankly we've had it with you. You have to get to doing what you're supposed to do, which is to govern for the people of this province to make sure that we have access to universal, accessible health care. If you were to follow the report that Ruth had put through the district health council, we wouldn't be in this mess in the first place.

1150

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity as well this morning to put some thoughts on the record about this very, very serious and important situation that's evolving in northern Ontario. Anybody who understands the north knows that we up there depend very much on an integrated system of health care, as in everything else. We can't, each community, provide to each other all that is necessary to make sure that the people who live and work in our areas have the best of health care, the health care they need, so we depend on places like Sudbury, Thunder Bay, the Sault and Timmins to have those services available when we need them so we can share with each other in times of crisis.

When budgets are cut there's sometimes a redistribution of resources and previous governments have been involved in that. But this present approach to health care in the north is just absolutely unbelievable and in the long run is going to wind up with some real calamities at the front door of this place, by way of example, and it will be squarely on the shoulders of Mike Harris and the Minister of Health when that happens.

In Sault Ste Marie, we have example after example of people, as the member for Cochrane South said, who are

in need of the kind of services we access at the regional centre in Sudbury. The member for Sudbury suggested that 18% of the cases seen, particularly in cancer and cardiac, in the hospitals of Sudbury come from outside Sudbury and that is absolutely right. In Sault Ste Marie we are absolutely dependent on some of the services that are provided in Sudbury.

Health care in the north is one of the fundamentals to any future we are going to have in that part of Ontario that's so important to the whole of the province. If we don't have first-class health care, if we don't have access in a timely and efficient fashion, people are going to die and we're not going to be able to attract people up to our neck of the woods to do business or set up industry or work with us in the so many ways in which we're dependent on people to make sure our communities are viable and alive and well.

We have to look at this decision that's been made by this government in the context of that overall question of how we can maintain and improve the health of northern Ontario, of the people who live there. The decision that was made by this government, to reduce the number of beds in Sudbury from a level that was already difficult for us to access to the number we see today, is absolutely unworkable and will in the long haul result in longer and longer waiting lists and more and more people not getting the services they need, and probably in the long run our having to look at the possibility of having to send patients from northern Ontario to southern Ontario.

We still don't know what the decisions are going to be around what hospitals are going to be left after this restructuring committee comes through with its big swath and scythe in southern Ontario and cuts hospitals down here. We don't know yet what kind of impact that's going to have on the north and I don't know in particular what's going to happen in Sault Ste Marie.

I just want to share with you in closing an example of what in fact will happen. We had a man in Sault Ste Marie just recently, and there's a story in the Sault Star this week. It goes: "Waiting Lists for Heart Patients Grow Longer and Longer," and, "Widow Blames Health Cuts for Her Husband's Death."

"Norman Kuczenski died at the Plummer hospital after waiting almost 10 days for bypass surgery at Sudbury's Memorial Hospital....

"Mr Kuczenski's cardiologist, Dr David Gould, sees him as an example of what happens when a system is inadequately funded....

"Gould predicted that waiting lists will get even worse when Memorial closes and merges with Laurentian Hospital in Sudbury. That merger will see operating room times and beds become even more scarce."

So people are dying and more people are going to die.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this private member's motion today in regard to the Sudbury hospital restructuring. As members know, two weeks ago I brought up a question about a case, which was also referred to here in a previous speech from the member for Cochrane South, to the Minister of Health about a constituent of mine who died because he was not able to access heart surgery in a timely manner.

Quite frankly, I don't want to live in an Ontario where people are dying needlessly because they cannot access services. With the wealth we generate in this province, especially the wealth we generate in northern Ontario, there is no reason why citizens of northern Ontario are going to have to die because they're caught in lineups because they cannot access the medical care they need in a timely fashion. Richard Adams was one of many people who find themselves in this situation. Right now our cardiac heart surgery waiting list in northeastern Ontario at the Sudbury Memorial Hospital is 197 people.

The Minister of Health is saying that we are now going to close hundreds of beds in Sudbury and somehow the service is going to be better. I say to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, why don't you make the service better now? I'm not against restructuring, but show me how the service is going to be better.

It's not a funny matter, I say to some of the members who are laughing here. I'm talking about a constituent of mine who died. This man died at 46 years of age. That's not needed in Ontario, and it shouldn't be needed in Ontario. It's wrong, and this government should be doing something about it.

Get the services in place. We talk about community-based services; we talk about bricks and mortar; we talk about rationalization of service and restructuring. These are all wonderful catchwords that ministers and parliamentary assistants bandy about, but I've had a resident who has died because he could not access surgery in a timely manner.

On April 23 of this year, the doctor made the decision that Richard Adams should be put on the waiting list for heart surgery. He didn't get that until late in September, after a second heart attack, and died a day later. That should not happen in Ontario. I know it doesn't happen in Toronto. We've got to make sure that we have access to medical services in a timely manner.

The member for Sault Ste Marie just mentioned another of his constituents who was caught in the same situation. So we're saying to you, let's fix it, let's get the system fixed so that we don't have these waiting lists. Then we can start talking about how we can rationalize these services. But if we're not getting the people in a timely manner — and let's face it, when you've had cardiac surgery, you don't kick the person out after 24 hours. You need to have an acute-care bed there so that the person can heal properly before they have to be sent home, remembering that being sent home might involve travel of at least 300 to 400 miles across northern Ontario. That person has to be in very good shape before you discharge them from the hospital.

We've got to take a close look at this. This isn't like rationalizing hospitals on University Avenue, when you've got five within three or four city blocks of each other. We've got 650,000 people right across northeastern Ontario who depend on the Sudbury hospital system for their services. Now to cut those beds allocated to those people outside the Sudbury region from 100 to about 16 or 18, an 82% decrease, is ludicrous.

I predict, unfortunately, that waiting list is going to grow. I predict, unfortunately, that we're going to have more deaths in northeastern Ontario because you're not

doing a proper job, you're not restructuring properly and you're denying people timely access to the health care system. It's going to cost lives. I ask you today to re-examine that and make sure this doesn't happen, because the blood of those people is going to be on your head.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Sudbury East has two minutes to respond.

Ms Martel: I want to thank all the members for participating in the debate, but I want to focus my remarks upon the responses that were made by the member for Huron and the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

I say to the member for Huron, with all due respect, I was the local member in Sudbury East at the time Minister Grier made a commitment that 100% of the savings that would come from restructuring in Sudbury would return to our community. I know the debate. I know the issue. I was the member and I still am. I really resent that in this House today you tried to portray that as not a commitment, not a promise, by making some kind of obscure reference to Windsor. Windsor is a 10-hour drive from Sudbury. I don't care what happened in Windsor. I care about the commitment that was made in my community by a former health minister, a commitment that your minister now does not want to guarantee.

The second point I want to make, with all due respect, to the people who are on the commission, who have been appointed by the minister, who are Conservatives, is that in my community there was a local process. People who work and live in my community, who understand the needs in my community, after two and a half years put together a compromise solution. It was accepted by the district health council. It went to your minister and it sat on his desk from October on. Now we have a solution that's going to be imposed by the handpicked commission and it does not reflect what came to be the compromise in my community. That's a shameful process.

With all due respect to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, you didn't promise in the Common Sense Revolution that health care spending would be maintained at \$17.4 billion. You promised no cuts to health care. That's what people voted on. In my community, you have already cut \$10 million from the hospital system this fiscal year. That comes directly as a result of the announcement made by this minister to cut \$1.3 billion. There have been cuts, they're affecting people, the situation in Sudbury is going to get worse because of this solution that's being imposed and I encourage all of you to reject what the commission is going to do.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 41, standing in the name of Mr Crozier. If there are any members opposed to balloting on this, they will please rise.

Mr Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 83, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.
We will deal with this after the next ballot item.

HEALTH CARE RESTRUCTURING

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal now with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Ms Martel. If there are any members opposed to balloting on this item now, they will please rise.

All those in favour of the resolution please say "aye."
Those opposed to the resolution please say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.
Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would the members please take their seats. Ballot item number 41, second reading of Bill 83, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, standing in the name of Mr Crozier. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Froese, Tom	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Galt, Doug	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Gilchrist, Steve	Pouliot, Gilles
Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaître, Bernard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bassett, Isabel	Gravelle, Michael	Ramsay, David
Beaubien, Marcel	Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bisson, Gilles	Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian
Boyd, Marion	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Caplan, Elinor	Johnson, Ron	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Jack	Kells, Morley	Shea, Derwyn
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Skarica, Toni
Clement, Tony	Lankin, Frances	Smith, Bruce
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Snobelen, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Leach, Al	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martin, Tony	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Wildman, Bud
Elliott, Brenda	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie L.	McLeod, Lyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fisher, Barbara	Miclash, Frank	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Morin, Gilles E.	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Hastings, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 84; the nays are 1.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the bill carried.

Pursuant to standing order 94(k), the bill is referred to — Mr Crozier.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I would respectfully ask that Bill 83 be referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Is there a majority in favour? Those in favour of having this referred to the standing committee on administration of justice, please rise and remain standing.

There is a majority in favour. This bill will be referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

HEALTH CARE RESTRUCTURING

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Ms Martel. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Grandmaître, Bernard	Miclash, Frank
Boyd, Marion	Gravelle, Michael	Morin, Gilles E.
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, Elinor	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Saunderson, William
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Shea, Derwyn
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Sheehan, Frank
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Skarica, Toni
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Ron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Leach, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie L.	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fisher, Barbara	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Pettit, Trevor	Young, Terence H.
Froese, Tom	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	
Galt, Doug	Ross, Lillian	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the resolution lost. It being a quarter after 12, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1216 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CREDIT UNION DAY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I rise today to recognize the Ontario credit union system. Credit unions are financial service cooperatives owned and controlled in the community by the people they serve. Credit unions are community-based and community-focused. They play an integral role in local development by channelling members' savings back into the communities in which they operate as personal and business loans, mortgages and dividends paid on members' shares.

Ontario's credit unions and caisses populaires have accumulated \$13.2 billion in assets and serve some 1.7 million members. Nationally the credit union and caisse populaire systems have \$100.4 billion in assets and over 10 million members.

More than 3,000 Ontarians participate as volunteers on credit union boards and committees in communities across the province. Member credit unions of Credit Union Central of Ontario provide employment for about 4,000 people across the province.

Ontario's first credit union was established in 1908 in Ottawa. Most credit unions were established during the 1940s and 1950s in response to the need to provide affordable consumer credit.

To those members and volunteers of Ontario's credit unions, we applaud your effort and service.

TORONTO EAST DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have in my hand a report entitled *Healing the Community*, the report of the Jobs Ontario Community Action program and the Toronto East Downtown Residents' Association. Some 25,000 JOCA dollars have empowered and organized this community by giving it the tools to change its future, but this government cut the JOCA program, another action taken for ideological rather than logical reasons.

The Jobs Ontario Community Action grant allowed residents to develop a comprehensive database of their community. There's now a record of all community buildings, their uses, the businesses in the community as well as demographics and spending habits of the residents. This database is invaluable and will continue to be as it becomes updated in the future.

With these data in hand the Toronto East Downtown Residents' Association has been able to approach developers and make the case that their neighbourhood in downtown Toronto is worth investing in. The Toronto East Downtown Residents' Association is, in my view, to be complimented for the exceptional quality of the work it has done over the long year or two it has been in the process of working on this. It's unfortunate that I cannot say the same for the present government, which has cut the Jobs Ontario Community Action program.

SANDBANKS PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I rise today to acknowledge the end of another successful tourist season at Sandbanks Provincial Park

near Picton. Many of you may have visited Sandbanks, as 415,000 Ontarians did this summer. That represents a 2% increase in visitors over last year and a 9% revenue increase.

Most people come to enjoy the many kilometres of great beaches. Others come to climb North America's largest freshwater sand dunes, which were left behind by a retreat of the glaciers in 12,500 years of subsequent wind and erosion. Still others come to hike along the world's greatest freshwater bay mouth barrier.

I wish to congratulate employees of the park for another successful season of maintenance and preservation of the delicate ecosystem. The Sandbanks Provincial Park is a resource worthy of a visit by all Ontarians.

SOEURS DE LA CHARITÉ D'OTTAWA

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Dimanche dernier, j'ai assisté aux célébrations du 100^e anniversaire d'arrivée à Rockland des soeurs de la Charité d'Ottawa. Ce fut pour moi et pour plusieurs une excellente opportunité pour revoir des gens que je n'avais pas eu le plaisir de rencontrer depuis un certain temps.

Je veux profiter des quelques minutes à ma disposition pour offrir mes plus sincères félicitations et remerciements aux soeurs de la Charité d'Ottawa qui ont oeuvré au cours des 100 dernières années et qui sont toujours présentes au sein de la communauté de Rockland. Comme tous les autres citoyens de Rockland, j'ai été témoin au fil des ans du travail que les soeurs de la Charité ont accompli.

Au nom des citoyens de Rockland et de Prescott et Russell, je vous dis merci pour les bonnes oeuvres que vous avez réalisées et le bonheur que vous avez propagé au sein de la communauté de Rockland. Votre présence chez nous a marqué notre existence et nos vies spirituelles et j'espère que vous serez encore présentes parmi nous durant de longues années afin de poursuivre votre mission d'amour, de paix et de bienfaisance.

CREDIT UNION DAY

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I wish to join my distinguished colleague the member for Essex South in expressing my pleasure indeed in informing the House that today is Credit Union Day in Ontario. Today across Ontario and Canada, credit union members, volunteers and staff are joining together to celebrate the credit union movement and the cooperative philosophy upon which it is based. This year, tying in with National Co-op Week and its team, picture the possibilities.

Credit unions can reflect on their past accomplishments and can look forward to a bright future in the highly competitive financial services industry. You will recall that new legislation introduced last year, 1995, by the previous government, that of the New Democratic Party, allowed the credit unions to level the playing field to give them a competitive equivalent in the marketplace.

Today most credit unions offer their members a full range of financial services, from personal accounts to mortgages and small business loans. We're talking in terms of 1.7 million members across Ontario and no less than \$13.5 billion. Therefore I would extend our best

wishes and also convey the best wishes of all the members present.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I am pleased to inform the House that Commercial Alcohols Inc has begun construction on a world-class ethanol plant in Chatham. This \$153-million plant, which will be fully operational next winter, will produce about 150 million litres of ethanol and industrial alcohol per year. Operating around the clock, 365 days a year, this facility will have an annual economic impact of approximately \$100 million.

In addition to the hundreds of jobs generated during the construction phase, about 400 full-time direct and indirect jobs will be created when the plant becomes operational. As well as ethanol, a substantial amount of compressed carbon dioxide will be produced and handled by Praxair at a companion facility. In addition, 127,000 tonnes a year of high-protein animal feed will also be produced.

The completion of this facility in Chatham will provide a much-needed source of a renewable fuel and an expanded market for 15 million bushels of corn grown in Kent county and other parts of Ontario.

This is a great example of community, government and business working together. Construction of the Commercial Alcohols plant is further indication that all of Ontario, and especially Kent county, is open for business.

PREMIER'S VISIT TO TIMMINS

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): Premier Harris and his Minister of Northern Development and Mines will be travelling to Timmins tomorrow for what can be termed, at best, a public relations exercise. For more than a year, the members of the Liberal northern caucus have been calling upon the Premier and the minister to stop the dismantling of northern communities. Premier Harris and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines have much to answer for when they take their public relations trip to Timmins tomorrow.

1340

Northern residents want to know why this government has cut education and health care funding in the north, this resulting in the closure of five of our northern hospitals. They want to know why the Harris government has destroyed both the Ministry of Northern Development and the Ministry of Natural Resources. Northern residents want to know why this government continues to download its responsibilities to northern municipalities and why the Harris revolutionaries have closed family support offices throughout the north, and again, why they have reduced our winter road maintenance.

Mr Premier, as you will know, the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce have called upon you and your Minister of Northern Development to establish an office for a Deputy Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Natural Resources in northwestern Ontario. I do hope that these members do not have to pay \$150 a plate just to come and see you when you travel to Timmins tomorrow.

I say to you that your record in northern Ontario, to say the least, is dismal. You and your government have much to answer for in the north and this public relations trip tomorrow just won't cut it.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Yet again we see the Tory caucus machine, the Tory Party machine working in full splendour. While people in northern Ontario have been trying to get the ear of the Premier and also the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for months now, we find that mayors such as Steve Butland and Vic Power are having a hard time trying to get access to the Premier. What are they doing? How do they get access to the Premier in northern Ontario? They've got to pay \$150 to get to a Tory fundraiser to get the ear of the Premier.

To the Tories, I say shame. The job of the Premier is supposed to be a job where you are accessible to the mayors across Ontario, to the citizens across Ontario, so people can have their say with the Premier and make sure their views can be heard. While this fund-raiser is going on, there will be literally hundreds of people outside the Senator hotel in Timmins today who will be saying to the Premier: "We don't like what you're doing in northern Ontario. In fact, we oppose what you're doing in northern Ontario because we believe that in the end this agenda will do nothing but harm not only the north but Ontario in general."

I would like to read just one excerpt from an editorial that appeared in the Timmins Daily Press today, the fine newspaper that it is. It says: "Those on the 'corporatist' side will pay \$150 to dine with the provincial Premier in completely friendly surroundings and those opposed can stand with their peers" and be left feeling —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

CREDIT UNION DAY

Mr Bill Grimmatt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to join my colleagues from Essex South and Lake Nipigon in informing the House that Ontario's credit unions are today celebrating Credit Union Day as part of National Co-op Week.

As financial services co-ops, credit unions are owned by the people they serve. Their decisions are made locally. With more than 1.1 million members and \$8.5 billion in assets, Ontario's credit unions help local economies by channelling members' savings back into their communities as personal and business loans, mortgages and dividends paid on members' shares.

Credit unions know their communities and play an integral role in supporting small businesses, which create jobs. In some communities, the credit union is the only financial institution. The credit union approach is a model of self-reliance. It's an example of the wonderful things people can accomplish by working together to solve their own problems.

Ontario credit unions sponsor community activities, initiate public education programs on financial matters and promote local economic development.

To raise awareness of credit unions and their benefits, credit union members, volunteers and staff are today holding open houses and other events across the province.

I encourage Ontarians to visit their local credit unions to learn more about their unique contribution to the province's communities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In the Common Sense Revolution we promised to streamline government and get rid of overlap and duplication, and with the help of the Who Does What panel we're delivering today on that promise.

Since they began their work four months ago, they've made recommendations on property tax assessment, emergency services and environmental approvals.

I've also had recommendations on municipal reform from the panel. As with all their recommendations, they point the way to a fundamental change in the way the province and local governments work together, to lower overall costs for the taxpayers, to the elimination and duplication of over-regulation, to a division of responsibilities that makes sense. The goal is smaller, more efficient and affordable governments at all levels.

This afternoon we're introducing legislation to give municipalities more authority and greater flexibility to govern and to deliver services effectively. A major part of the bill is a new Municipal Elections Act. The current system is broken. Recounts can last almost as long as the electoral term. There are still outstanding recount issues related to the 1994 municipal elections. This does not serve taxpayers well. This is not common sense.

We want to make it easier for people to exercise their democratic right to vote, so we're opening the door to new ways of voting. People who can't make it to the polls may be able to vote by mail, for example, and municipalities will be able to open the polls earlier, if they so choose, so people may vote on their way to work in the morning.

One of the Who Does What panel recommendations was that we move the municipal election day to the middle of October. That's an excellent idea, but right at this point in time many municipalities are now working to restructure before the next elections. An earlier election would only give them less time and make that job more difficult. I'll certainly be considering changing the date before the elections in the year 2000.

We're also protecting people's privacy and security. Voters' lists will no longer be publicly posted on streets.

We're putting in place a faster process, shortening the election period and reducing the number of forms required from 40 to five.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): David Crombie is out of control.

Hon Mr Leach: I thank the member for St Catharines for his support.

In all of these areas, we're taking into account the specific need of local communities. We understand that the problems of Toronto are not the same as those in Dysart township. Our goal is to protect the integrity of

the municipal elections, ensuring a proper democratic process while making it more efficient, more accessible, less wasteful and less costly.

We're not just changing the election process; we're making other changes as well. We're making it easier for municipalities to reduce council size, for example, so there should be fewer local politicians.

We're enhancing municipal authority to get the most from their cash management while still protecting taxpayers' money.

The rules on municipal investments have changed little since the 1840s, but the financial world has. Municipalities will be held to a standard even more stringent than trustees and they will not be permitted to put the taxpayers' money at risk.

We're also introducing legislation this afternoon to help cut local transportation costs. It begins to implement the Ministry of Transportation's community transportation action program and it represents a first step in helping communities coordinate and restructure local transportation services.

All of these changes will be in place for the 1997 municipal elections. This legislation is only a start. The Who Does What panel has also recommended a fundamental rewrite of the Municipal Act, and we hope to introduce legislation along these lines in the spring.

By the beginning of 1998 we'll be able to point to a new public sector — one that's smaller, one that's more streamlined, one that's more cost-effective. The division of responsibility for services will be clear. Taxpayers will know who is making spending decisions.

The laws that guide local government activities will be streamlined. Provincial regulations will be cut back. Ultimately, we will save taxpayers' money by reducing overlap without compromising the quality of services they receive.

As I said, in the Common Sense Revolution we promised to streamline government and get rid of overlap and duplication. With the help of the Who Does What panel, we are now delivering on that promise.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): What's of great interest, of course, with respect to the Who Does What panel is that the people of Ontario aren't as interested in who does what but who's paying for what. That's the bottom line. What this bill is really talking about is the continuation of your downloading on municipalities the cost of services you're no longer willing to pay for. You know as well as I do, Mr Minister, that what this is really all about is the fact that in another year or two you're going to be completely out of the grant business to municipalities at all. So when you're talking about making more efficient government and making smaller government etc, that's just a whole bunch of gobbledegook.

1350

It's kind of interesting that you spent almost half a page talking about when the election day will be held next year and how people can vote and where the voters' lists will be maintained, but you only have one line on the notion that the goal is smaller, more efficient and affordable government. Mr Minister, tell that to the municipalities that are currently involved in the restruc-

turing processes, where in some cases you've gone from 25 municipalities to four municipalities on your theory that bigger is better is cheaper. We all know that it ain't necessarily so. We've got examples in the past, and regional governments are probably the best examples, where as a result of these kinds of downsizings, these kinds of restructurings, in effect government at the local level costs a lot more than it ever did before.

Mr Minister, I think the other thing we have to keep in mind is your track record with respect to the kind of legislation you've brought forward before. We will be taking a very close look at this bill because you may recall in Bill 26 you made a number of comments in the House here as to the powers that municipalities had. When some municipalities came forward and said, "Yes, we do have the power to levy gas taxes; yes, we do have the power to levy sales taxes etc," you immediately denied it based on the best legal advice that you can get, and eventually, of course, we all realized and know what happened. What happened was that you had to bring in amendments to make certain that those kind of taxes you had said in the House could be imposed couldn't be imposed. So we're going to take a very close look at this legislation to make sure that what you're saying it can do, it can actually do, and I doubt that very much, taking your past record into account.

I think it's also very interesting that you were the person who stated at an AMO conference recently that some municipalities are already getting into the budgeting process whereby they basically are not going to rely on any government grants, and this piece of legislation is perfectly in line with that.

The changes you're making with respect to the transportation situation, which will allow municipalities to get involved with the private sector, are again only about one thing and that's the fact that sooner or later — because you've already made the statement with respect to GO Transit, or at least the Minister of Transportation has made it — municipalities will have to absorb a larger cost of the transportation costs. I'm quite sure that the same thing is going to happen with respect to the municipal transit systems.

It's very interesting that you should state that there haven't been any changes made with respect to the municipal investments that municipalities can invest in since the 1840s. What you don't say, and what I understand to be in the legislation, is that in effect you're going to give municipalities much greater borrowing capacity and borrowing power. Why do they need that borrowing power? Well, it's quite obvious why. If you're going to cut off their grants, municipalities, in order to exist and in order to give the kind of services that their taxpayers have relied on and depended on, will be required to borrow money and that's really what's behind this whole notion.

What's behind it is the fact that they will need those powers because you're cutting off their grants and their subsidies and they will now have to be able to raise that money through other methods. So don't make it sound as if you're doing them a big favour. What they've always said to you, Mr Minister, not only this past year but over the last 20 years, is, give us more power but also give us

the resources to go along with it. What you have basically done in just about every piece of legislation that you have brought forward is you've cut off their sources of funding. Yes, you're giving them more powers in certain areas, but you've cut off their funding at the same time and you've made it extremely difficult for municipalities to exist.

Mr Minister, we will be watching this legislation very closely, we will be studying it closely, because we're quite sure that once again you'll have to bring in major amendments to cover up some of the shortcomings you've announced here today.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I want to try in three or four minutes to be as positive as I can with the suggestions that have come forth from this minister, and there are a number of positive things here. The elimination, for example, of the posting of the voters' list is a useful thing. I think a number of people have talked about privacy matters and eliminating that list. Posting it on various posts was a problem for many voters. Having to do away with that is a very useful thing, so we congratulate the minister on that useful proposal.

On the whole matter of recounts, we've had some problems in the past, as he and you, Mr Speaker, know. I think the way this is being dealt with — it goes prior to what we had in 1988 — may address some of those costly matters dealing with recounts. Now it will happen, based on a tie, where council determines it's in the public interest and/or individuals have an opportunity to go to the courts. I think it's a simpler way of dealing with this issue and it deals with problems that people have raised.

On the whole matter of giving people an alternative way of voting, it's interesting. It will bring the ways that people can vote up to the 21st century, where a number of people will be allowed to vote through the Internet, I am told, and through a touch screen, I am told. All of that is interesting and I find it very useful. On the other hand, I'm not sure how we are going to monitor that or whether we're going to get into greater confusion as we modernize in the future. But it's an interesting thing that the minister is getting involved in.

On the whole issue of refundable money that goes to candidates, what they've added here is that all of that will be based on the percentage of vote, and that will be determined by regulation. I'm a bit concerned about why we're leaving that to regulation and why we're not determining that clearly in the beginning so people know and understand the system. I'm a bit concerned about what you've done there, Minister, and I would urge you to review that, because I think everybody should know in advance and we shouldn't be leaving it to either you or some civil servants to determine what that percentage of vote should be.

What you've also allowed here is referendums, where you will allow utilities and boards of education, and municipalities for that matter, to be able to have a referendum now at any time and not just during an election. Interesting. I suppose that will allow for greater democracy to occur, but I, quite frankly, am worried. This will have very costly implications because, as we know, every referendum that we have is very costly. It could have some interesting adverse effects as people

decide and determine what kind of referendum they will have on what issues. I'm very fascinated and look forward with interest to the possibilities of this, both in terms of cost and in terms of some regressive things that can happen in communities.

But all of these, again, are harmless, useful suggestions that I think we should be looking at. I'm not sure what benefits they will have one way or the other, but I think some of them needed to have been done. Giving municipalities the latitude —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, please. Could the government members please take their seats. It's very difficult to hear the response. It's very difficult to hear because of the din of the conversation. If you want to have a conversation, go outside. Clearly it's very difficult for a speaker to respond to the minister if a whole bunch of people are standing in front of the benches. The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Thank you kindly, Mr Speaker.

The real issue, however, quite connected to this — and the minister speaks to it very briefly when he says, "The system is broken." The comment I have to this is that the minister has helped to break the system. The system wasn't as bad as once he and his government have made the 40% cuts over two years to municipalities. That's when they finally broke the system, and that's really a diversion. This is a diversion from the real downloading that has happened to municipalities and a real diversion from the cost that municipalities now have had to bear.

That's the real issue. This is where the system is broken and this is where municipalities are now worried about their ability to be able to deliver the child care programs that are within their jurisdiction; to be able to deliver the programs regarding transportation for the disabled, which they have cut; to deliver on the budgets that police services boards had, which have been cut indirectly. These are the real issues that need to be dealt with and this is where the downloading has happened that has hurt and broken the backs of municipalities.

What the minister has proposed in this recommendation that he presents today is all right, it's useful, it fixes some things, but it doesn't fix the fundamental problems that he has caused with the funding cuts over a two-year period of 40%. That's real magnitude of cost cuts, that's the problem.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. We over here are starting to ask ourselves if anybody over there is prepared to stand up for the environment and, by so doing, the health of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't think they actually heard who the question was to. I don't necessarily believe it's your fault. I would ask the government members to come to order, please. It's very difficult to hear the questions.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Your latest blow to the environment is found in your decision to privatize the Ontario Clean Water Agency. You tell us the sale will yield big dollars for the government, but you ignore the fact that this agency, once privatized, will at times have to choose between ensuring the safety and security of our water supply and the demands of shareholders. In short, this privatization will threaten our health.

Minister, tell me that you were merely musing aloud, and that having fully considered this privatization issue you have decided that it's not in the public interest because it would place the health of Ontarians at risk.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I believe that we should look at the privatization of this agency because already in the province of Ontario many municipalities are choosing private operators to operate their water plants, their sewage plants, and those kinds of things. It's my belief that can be done as long as the municipality is still in full control. The province will be still setting the standards, will be still ensuring that the people of Ontario have a safe, clean, reliable water source. The whole concept of this particular agency, which was split off by the previous government into a corporate entity, was to give it more flexibility in what it might or might not do.

I think, quite frankly that there is a significant benefit at looking at this in a reasonable light in terms of what we are doing, and that in no way is the drinking water or the environmental standards of the province compromised by looking at this particular option.

Mr McGuinty: I'm a little bit confused because yesterday you were quoted as saying this was a sure thing, it was going ahead, and today you tell me that you're merely considering it.

I want to move you along to another health problem that you're creating for Ontarians. You are proposing to change the regulation that limits the amount of sulphur found in the heating oil used by Metro houses and businesses. In fact, you want to double the sulphur content. This means that our heating oil will be twice as dirty and it will obviously create more health problems in Toronto, which holds the dubious distinction of being Canada's smog capital.

Yesterday you said: "We lose 1,800 Ontarians a year prematurely due to poor-quality air in the province, and I am going to fight with every bone in my body to get that number down."

Minister, will you now withdraw this proposed regulation change because you clearly understand it's going to be harmful to our health?

Hon Mr Sterling: This is hardly a supplementary question to the first question but, notwithstanding that, this particular proposal under the regulatory review that we're doing — the idea here is to pay attention to what is coming out of the smokestack, so to speak, rather than what goes into the particular furnace, boiler, or whatever is involved in producing the smoke or the emission at the end. My particular bent is to try to control what comes out and not be so concerned with what goes in.

Notwithstanding that, I have said that in no way will I compromise the standards that are produced at this time

which affect the outcome with regard to the SO₂ emissions. Therefore, in the end we will have stricter standards than are presently on the books.

Mr McGuinty: What I'm trying to make the minister understand is that he has tremendous influence over the health that we in this province enjoy.

I want to speak to him now about another issue, but it's all connected with health and the environment, and that's about your new plans for disposal of garbage in Ontario. In opposition, your Premier made the very sound argument that we ought to consider all options for disposal of waste and that any option must be subject to a full environmental assessment, but your new rules will not require that in every case large dumps, or even incinerators, be made subject to a full environmental assessment. This means that Ontarians will get less than the best waste disposal methods and that consequently we're going to get less than the best protection of our health from the waste we produce. I want to give you this opportunity to change your mind and assure us that Ontario dumps will always be subject to full environmental assessment hearings.

Hon Mr Sterling: Under the present legislation the Minister of Environment has the choice as to whether anything has an environmental assessment. Under the new act we are passing we will be giving waste disposal sites full environmental assessment. I don't see what has changed.

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): My second question is for the Minister of Transportation. This morning my staff spoke with a young woman by the name of Linda Concellier. She is 24 years of age. She's a bright university grad and she's looking for work. Linda has cerebral palsy and her condition requires that she walk with crutches because she suffers from very bad balance. Linda has been deemed ineligible for Wheel-Trans services. Her appeal has also been rejected, and this notwithstanding that her doctor sent a letter stating that it is very unsafe for her to use conventional transit. Can you tell Linda how she is supposed to get around now that your cuts have taken away the Wheel-Trans service she needs to live as a contributing member of her community?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I'm very concerned that the mobility and accessibility needs of the people of Ontario are met and I can assure the honourable member that this province, this government, has not cut Wheel-Trans. That is purely the responsibility of the municipalities. We've been saying that all along. We proved it last year. We did not cut the funding. As a matter of fact, we made sure that the funding levels this year were exactly the same as last year, and those were levels that were not cut. These are criteria that the municipalities presently are addressing. It's not the Harris government that's cutting Wheel-Trans. Not one dollar did we take out of Wheel-Trans.

Mr McGuinty: You should know that the line the government has been feeding us, one where the government is washing its hands completely of the impact of its

cuts, is wearing pretty thin. The fact of the matter is that the people of Ontario know that it's this government that's behind larger classes, hospital closures, user fees and cuts to Wheel-Trans.

Linda wants to get to work. She's getting social assistance and she wants to get off it, but she can't even get to her job interviews. In your Common Sense Revolution you promise, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." The fact is that aid has been cut, and to date you've done nothing to change that fact. What specific action are you going to take to help Linda and thousands of others like her who are suffering from your cuts to Wheel-Trans?

Hon Mr Palladini: In the initial question from the honourable member, I don't believe I heard which municipality he might have been referring to that this young lady is dealing with.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Hon Mr Palladini: However, I want to say that in Metro the Toronto Transit Commission chose to do a study, actually spending somewhere in the vicinity of \$500,000 or \$600,000, to see what criteria would be sufficient or needed to deliver the services Wheel-Trans delivers. I only have to say to those people that they should be putting their money back into Wheel-Trans.

I want to say one other thing very clearly: Other municipalities around the province of Ontario are very adequately delivering those services with the funds they are being provided. When you talk about delivering of services at \$45 a ride versus \$22 a ride, I don't believe the Harris government has cut \$1 out of Wheel-Trans.

1410

Mr McGuinty: One of the questions we've got to ask ourselves is, what kind of assistance do we ultimately want to provide to our disabled in this province? That responsibility ultimately lies with this government and not with municipalities. This government can't continue, you simply can't continue to try to establish some distance between yourselves and the effects of the cuts on real people. Whether it's special education, larger class sizes or individuals like Linda being trapped in their apartment, the government's standard response is the same: "We're not to blame." Passing the buck doesn't do anything to change the situation. The fact is that your cuts are hurting people like Linda.

The other day we heard of hundreds of kidney dialysis patients and others with hidden disabilities who have also been cut off Wheel-Trans. Without Wheel-Trans, Linda and many others have no way to fulfil some of their most basic needs. Above all, they can't help themselves or their community. Will you show some compassion and honour your promise made in the Common Sense Revolution? Will you restore the funding you've taken from the Wheel-Trans budget?

Hon Mr Palladini: I would just like to say to the honourable member that he is not the only one who has compassion. I believe this government has compassion. I believe this government wants to make sure there is a future for all our children and their children.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Palladini: It's a government that does care. It's a government that is looking for better ways to deliver services. That is one of the reasons we are looking at introducing the community transportation system. The community transportation action program, CTAP, is going to be something that will help municipalities take advantage of the resources they have, take advantage of the equipment they presently have. These are the things that we must do as a government: work with municipalities and help them deliver the services to more people in a more cost-efficient way. Yes, we do have compassion.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Health. Can the minister confirm to the Legislature that the Ontario health insurance plan has reached a deal with Grace and Hutzler hospitals in Detroit to provide obstetrical and prenatal care to Canadian women?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I can't confirm that for you at this moment; I'd have to check with staff. Certainly we're having discussions, as part of contingency planning, with a number of institutions throughout the province and in the border areas, with the United States and other jurisdictions.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): He spoke to them yesterday, as early as two days ago.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Windsor-Sandwich, please.

Mr Cooke: The fact of the matter is that doctors at these hospitals have talked to our constituency offices and we've confirmed this with the Ontario health insurance plan, the individual who negotiated the agreement. How can the minister justify the additional cost of \$7,000 to \$10,000 per patient —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the Minister of Health to withdraw that comment please.

Hon Mr Wilson: I withdraw it, Mr Speaker.

Mr Cooke: How can the minister justify the additional \$7,000 to \$10,000 per patient when the time that was spent to negotiate this agreement should have been spent at the bargaining table trying to negotiate an agreement with doctors in Ontario so that the taxpayers didn't get ripped off and so that the dollars needed in our health care system stayed in Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: We're doing exactly what the honourable member suggests. There are ongoing discussions, serious negotiations with the Ontario Medical Association. They've been going on for several days, quite frequent meetings between the parties. I am very hopeful that we'll never have to use our contingency plans, but it is prudent for the Minister of Health to prepare to ensure that services are available to the people of Ontario should there be a withdrawal or partial withdrawal of services from our physicians in Ontario. But I repeat, I fully expect we won't ever have to use the contingency plans.

Mr Cooke: The minister said in the spring that he didn't think we'd even need to develop contingency plans, and here we are nearly at the point where we're going to have a province-wide strike. I think the taxpayers are owed an explanation from the minister today. Can the minister confirm that all of the money that will be spent on this agreement is over and above the \$3.8-billion envelope for doctors' services in this province? Can the minister also tell us how this is going to provide a long-term solution for women who need prenatal and obstetrical care in this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: It's exactly this type of muckraking that really upsets the doctors in this province. It really, really upsets them when the opposition or others start to concoct these what-if scenarios.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole, come to order.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm not going to participate in that. We're having serious negotiations with Ontario's doctors. We're going to come to a conclusion in those negotiations that I am very hopeful will satisfy and deal with the frustrations they've had for a number of years, all the time that you were in office, all the time that the Liberals were in office. We're going to come to satisfactory conclusions to a number of the concerns that are being expressed. That's the confidence I have in the negotiating parties. We should give that process a full chance before you start fearmongering and upsetting the doctors in the province, which is exactly what this type of questioning leads to: upset doctors. They don't deserve it.

The Speaker: New question, the third party. The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): That's a funny response. Sorry, Minister. If anyone is getting them angry, it is you.

The Speaker: Who's your question to?

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to return to the question of Central Eglinton Children's Centre and the three other centres in Toronto which we are on the verge of losing. Minister, I know you know the background, so I don't want to go into the background. What I want to say to you is that these centres have only got a very short period of time to deal with the question of whether or not the schools, as they are being redesigned for a rebuild, will include a child care centre. In fact, in the case of Central Eglinton, we've got about a one-month window.

I've listened very carefully to your responses. I know that you are in fact consulting, as you say, on the \$600-million envelope and how you're going to reform child care. I understand that.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Ms Lankin: I understand that you're going to be looking at what role capital plays in that. In this case, we can't wait. You have 40 million new dollars which are unallocated this year, of operating dollars. Minister, would you please consider the possibility of converting

\$1.6 million of that in capital to deal with this immediate crisis of these four centres? I'm just asking you if you today would give us a commitment to consider that.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I appreciate the member's concern for these child care centres, and I know the parents and those who are involved with this centre are very, very concerned. I would be quite happy to go back to the regional office and see if we have any other options that we may be able to assist them with. As you know, capital funding is part of the decision that will be happening under the child care review, so I don't know what could possibly be committed at this time. But I would be quite happy to go back to the regional office and see if there are any other alternatives that we could explore.

Ms Lankin: Thank you very much, Minister. That is a very important first step and very good news for the parents and this centre. If this will be of some help to you, I want to point out a precedent that your office has already established in this area, and that's with respect to Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute and the Red Apple Day Care. You know this has been raised as an example.

In your letter to the Toronto board, you say that while the ministry provided funds to complete interior renovations, costs of land and construction of Red Apple were borne by the school board. That's incorrect. I want to give you this information so that you can check this through with your regional office. In fact, Red Apple is in a school that was being totally renovated and redesigned, and the child care space would have been eliminated. It was \$380,000 from Comsoc that allowed that centre to be built into the new, redesigned, renovated school. They needed your money, as do the people at Central Eglinton and the other three centres.

The Speaker: The question, please.

Ms Lankin: It was not, as you had indicated, for health and safety reasons, and the East York board did not pay the costs of construction. Minister, this is a good example. Will you, as you are reconsidering, look at Marc Garneau and Red Apple, see the parallel there and, if you agree with me that this is a precedent, take a look at that model of funding from Comsoc to support these four other schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said, I'd be quite happy to consider any information that may assist in our looking at if there are other alternatives, but I would also like to remind the honourable member that one of the reasons we as a government implemented requests for business cases before we gave out capital money last year, one of the reasons we believe that capital expenditures under child care need to be reviewed so carefully, is because of things that the Provincial Auditor said earlier this week, where we had circumstances where almost \$1 million of taxpayers' money was spent on a child care facility without proper controls, without proper checks and balances to ensure that that money was indeed being spent in the best way. I'm sure the honourable member would agree with me that I think we have to be very cautious in how we use taxpayers' money to make sure that it is indeed being used appropriately.

1420

Ms Lankin: Thank you, Minister. I do agree with —

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to find out from you whether you could instruct the Minister of Community and Social Services to tell us just when she'll go back to her regional offices.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order. Final supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, I do agree with you. I'm very pleased by the constructive approach that you're taking on this. I'm sure the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and the Minister of Municipal Affairs are equally pleased, as two of the centres are in their ridings.

Lastly, Minister, I want to say to you that a number of people have been here listening to your answer in the gallery: Alisa Humber, who is the assistant director of the Central Eglinton Children's Centre, and Judith Russellstone, Zelia Furtado, Christine Osti and Maryann Nolan, who are parents, are here.

Minister, they, the parents from the three other schools in Toronto and the Toronto School Board have been asking for a meeting with you in order to explore these issues. As I've said, we've only got a window of about one month to deal with this. We need you to commit to meet with the Toronto school board and these parents on this issue. I understand you're going to review this and go back to the regional office. What I would ask from you today is for a commitment that you will agree to meet with the Toronto board officials and the parents of these four centres.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Either I or my officials would be quite happy to meet with them.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'll take the opportunity to mention that in the government gallery is the ex-member for Scarborough Centre, Bill Davis.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): A question to the Minister of Transportation: The Provincial Auditor in his report released the other day asked how your ministry, through the Ontario Transportation Capital Corp, can justify awarding new contracts for the operation and maintenance of the Highway 407 project without competition, without public tender.

Minister, these contracts are worth hundreds of millions of dollars and are going to go to the same consortium that has already been given a \$1-billion sweetheart deal to build a toll highway. This is pure and simple highway robbery. Why should this 407 consortium continue to get additional multimillion-dollar contracts? On top of the \$1 billion, now you're giving them new contracts for building, maintenance and operation of the highway. Why is it not going to public tender?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): First of all, I recognize the importance of the Provincial Auditor's report. As a matter of fact, a lot of credence has been given it. Even in last year's, as you'll recall, the Provincial Auditor reported that 60% of highway infrastructure was badly in need of repair. This government

invested \$110 million more than the previous 10 governments. But as far as the Provincial Auditor's report, it was a contract that was signed by the previous government. We have not reissued any new contract. There is absolutely nothing new about the old contract signed by the previous government. I wish the member would recognize that.

Mr Colle: I think I would believe the auditor to be correct when the auditor states categorically on page 241, "...why a company owned by the winning consortium should be awarded the operations, maintenance and management contracts without competition." You know, Minister, that that original contract was torn apart and the public was basically on the line for \$1 billion. New rules were written and the contract was unbundled, yet you still continue to offer untendered contracts without competition that could be worth up to \$500 million. Produce these contracts, then, Mr Minister, for operations, maintenance and rehabilitation. Let's see the contracts, but make sure they are going out to competition.

Hon Mr Palladini: There is no new contract. The previous government signed a contract with a consortium to design, build and maintain the highway. It was part of the original contract.

Mr Colle: Maintenance wasn't part of that.

Hon Mr Palladini: Yes, it was. Maintenance was part of the original contract. If we were to make any attempts at all to break this contract, we'd be liable for a lawsuit.

Mr Colle: You're signing new ones.

Hon Mr Palladini: We're basically following through on what the previous government put on paper.

One point I want to make very clear is that we are not paying any more money for the highway than was originally contracted. The \$927 million is still the price of delivery of the contract. As far as maintenance is concerned, it was part of the original contract.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. You know that today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Ironically this date comes only a few weeks after the first anniversary of your 22% cuts to welfare rates for children, families and people with disabilities across the province.

You know that Ontario, as a signatory together with Canada and the other provinces, is held accountable, through the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on progress that we are making towards the eradication of poverty in this province. One of the main concerns that the committee has expressed is the fact that the usage of food banks has increased rather than decreased in jurisdictions in Canada, and certainly in Ontario. We see that very clearly set out for us in a report released only some days ago from the Ontario Social Safety Network, which talks about people from London to Toronto to other places across the province having to rely more gravely on food banks.

My question to you, Minister, is simply this: How are you going to account to the United Nations committee on the lack of progress you are making towards eradicating poverty in this province?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): To the honourable member, I think the United Nations does us all proud in terms of highlighting what is a very important goal, the eradication of child poverty. I feel quite comfortable in going to the United Nations and telling them about our investments in child care, community health supports, child nutrition, healthy babies and our investing in workfare to get people off social assistance, because I believe the best kind of social assistance system is a job. I feel quite confident that our job creation and all those other investments will convince the United Nations that we are indeed making progress in Ontario.

Mr Silipo: That kind of answer just isn't going to wash with me and it certainly isn't going to wash with the United Nations committee. I agree with you that the best approach you could provide is to get people into jobs, but you're not doing that. You are cutting child care, you are cutting programs for jobs, you got rid of programs that were putting people back into jobs, and all you've got to tell after a year and a half of squandering around with your famous workfare program is a handful of people, at best, in this program.

Minister, you're not getting people back to work. There's a severe crisis with respect to more people having to rely on food banks. There's a severe crisis with housing in this province. With people on social assistance having to use money they get through social assistance to feed their families and not being able to pay their rents, evictions are going up. The level of poverty is going up, not down.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Silipo: What are you going to do about it except for just standing there and giving your continuing platitudes?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would like to ask the honourable member what other jurisdiction he would like to hold up that has a better record than Ontario. I would also like to remind the honourable member that food bank usage was higher during his administration, when they were increasing welfare rates.

1430

Thirdly, I would like to ask the honourable member what he and his NDP members are doing about the union leadership out there that is beating up on United Way agencies and threatening to withdraw support for them because they might want to get involved in workfare. I think that's despicable. I want to know what you're doing to stop it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order please.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I'm a union member, sir.

The Speaker: I'm quite frankly not surprised, but that's got not a lot to do with it.

SAFE COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is to the Minister of Labour. All members of this House

know that accidents and injuries in the workplace have a very damaging effect on the lives of Ontarians. I know that as a result of a very personal commitment to health and safety, and to young people in particular, Mr Paul Kells has been very successful in setting up a partnership with the private sector known as the Safe Communities Foundation. Minister, I wonder if you could update the House on recent developments concerning the expansion of the Safe Communities Foundation.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would certainly be pleased to update the member on the initiatives of the Safe Communities Foundation. As has been mentioned, it is a private-public partnership that certainly is the result of hard work by Paul Kells. It's financially supported by five banks and two corporations, and the Ministry of Labour lends its technical expertise.

The first community that agreed to participate was Brockville. I'm pleased to say they are enjoying a tremendous amount of success. We now have had interest expressed from Lindsay, Peterborough, North Bay, Fort Frances and St Catharines, and they have steering committees set up.

People are interested in participating, and as a result, we're hoping to expand the culture of safety within the province of Ontario. But the best news is that tomorrow this particular foundation will be announcing its second safe community in Ontario: that will be Waterloo, Ontario.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you, Minister, for that response. Just as a brief supplementary, what evidence do we have that participating in the safe communities program will have a positive effect on the accident and injury rate at the local level?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I know that's a question I've asked and been asked: Does this work? I can tell you that when communities work together — employers, employees, city council, the mayor, school boards — we are seeing a reduction. In High River, Alberta, they were able to reduce injuries and illness by 66%. Brockville has set as a goal for reduction of injury and illness 50% over two years. I am very confident that, as a result of the work that's going to be done in this province, we are going to see the social consequences of injury and illness and the financial costs dramatically reduced.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. We're seeing a continuous attack by your government on disabled Ontarians every day. A few months ago there were massive staff reductions in vocational rehabilitation services in Metro and in Windsor, staff reductions by 50%. This is a program that provides training, educational upgrading and job placement for disabled Ontarians. A month or so ago we saw the leaked document by my leader in the House which outlined your proposal to charge user fees for services that the disabled use in the province of Ontario.

Minister, you are now in the process of redefining "disability," which is going to move tens of thousands of Ontarians off disability benefits on to welfare at a

reduction of about 50% in their benefits. Over the weekend you talked in a number of media reports in regard to privatizing social services in Ontario. Can you outline to the House any plans you have to privatize services for disabled individuals in the province of Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): To the honourable member, I have no plans to privatize social services, and we are not cutting services to the disabled or their income benefits by 50%.

Mr Agostino: I find that denial from the minister interesting. We have a document, a ministerial document, and it outlines a proposal that your ministry requested in the vocational rehabilitation services offices in Peterborough, Bracebridge and Barrie. It's an internal ministry document — it was written by your own staff — that outlines a proposal to privatize vocational rehabilitation services. This is a service that deals with over 20,000 disabled Ontarians, this service that you're looking at farming out to the private sector, whose interest will be profits rather than service to disabled Ontarians. Let me read from your own staff document.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Agostino: Let me quote from the document, Minister, from the secret document from your own staff. It says: "I feel that it's a very dangerous proposal. It sets up a real potential for abuse."

Minister, again, in view of this, can you tell us unequivocally today that you will not under any circumstances privatize any service for the disabled that your ministry is now providing in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I have no doubt that there are many officials in my ministry who are engaged in a lot of work —

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Are you willing to listen to the answer? — who are engaged in a lot of work in terms of presenting all kinds of proposals to ministers. That is their job. They do not make the policy. This minister, this caucus and cabinet make the policy, and that's where the decision lies, not with them.

The second thing I would like to remind the honourable member —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The second thing I would like to remind the honourable member is that about 25% of the Ministry of Community and Social Services budget already goes out to over 3,000 different agencies, both profit and non-profit, that give services to the disabled, that give services to other vulnerable groups of people. That is something that has gone on under previous governments, and I suspect that will continue to go on under this government.

Finally, I do not have plans to privatize social services.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy concerning his announced intentions to sell off the Ontario Clean

Water Agency, presumably to his friends in the private sector.

So far, you and a couple of your colleagues have been hiding behind the entire process that's going on with privatization, and the main example that we've had so far on privatized water delivery system is in Hamilton where Philip Environmental was given a \$190-million contract, and in January of this year Philip spilled 40 million gallons of sewage, as I understand it, into the Hamilton harbour.

In the UK, where they've privatized water services, one large company, British Northwest Water, made a profit of \$408 million on sales of only \$1.4 billion, and as though that wasn't enough, just prior to privatization in the UK, they raised water rates by 150% in order to get a good price.

So I am asking the minister, why are you tampering with the public water delivery system in this province if it's not simply to reward your friends in the private sector?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): The fact of the matter is that the provincial government does not control the municipalities that make these decisions as to who they will have run their plants. In some cases, municipalities have their own employees that run their plants, in some cases, they have the Ontario Clean Water Agency, and in some cases, as in Hamilton, they have private companies run their particular operation.

It's my view, quite frankly, that the Ontario Clean Water Agency can better compete in the open market which they are facing at this present time if they are under a private structure than if they are under a public structure. Notwithstanding that, the whole goal is to get cleaner, less expensive water to the people of Ontario, and that can be done in a competitive atmosphere better than in a monopolistic atmosphere, which is presently the kind of situation we have across Ontario.

1440

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My supplementary to the minister is this, and first I want to make a comment quickly about the minister's response to a question when he said, I believe, that he doesn't care what goes into the pipe but is more concerned about what comes out, which I think is appalling and absolutely astounding, that a Minister of Environment would say that.

Back to the water issue here, when private companies get hold of our water systems — may I say here as well it's my understanding that Philip utilities, the same one that's running the Hamilton system, is interested in buying this system. You might want to be aware of that. When they get hold of our water system, they will want to sell off as much water as possible.

Our government made water conservation part of OCWA's mandate and that saved money and helped protect the environment.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Churley: Minister, what I want to ask you is this: There are some really dangerous precedents being set if you sell this off. What kind of public process are you going to put in place to make sure, because you said you

want to move quickly, that the public has their say before you sell off our water in Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: I want to make it clear to the member and members of the Legislature that we're not talking about selling off the water plants. We're not talking about selling those off because they're not ours to sell. Those are owned by the municipalities across Ontario and they will have to make their decisions as to what they may or may not do. OCWA is an operating agency that is made up of mechanics, engineers, technicians, who operate these particular plants. Those are people and they are people who are in competition with the private sector and with the public sector at the municipal level.

I believe that by offering the municipalities a competitive process, we can strengthen their hand in getting a better deal for their taxpayers across Ontario. That's what this government is all about: doing better for less. This is a proposal which I think has some merit, and of course the cabinet of Ontario and the Legislature through the cabinet will have to answer for that.

Quite frankly, this is something which I support myself —

The Speaker: The question has been answered. New question.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): My question is to the minister responsible for culture in Ontario. Struggling to deal effectively with the inordinately high debt that has been left to this government to deal with, all ministries have been required to commit to a number of extraordinary expenditure reduction measures. Your ministry is no different than the others.

Lately, you've taken a number of hits for the kinds of reductions you've had to take. You have been criticized in some quarters for cuts to the arts and culture community. It is then with some surprise that I read in the Globe and Mail comments by Robert Fulford: "We have just begun to deal with the disquieting fact that we ran ourselves deep into debt because we were possessed by a collective looniness," and finally, "not once in that entire period" — during the 1970s and 1980s —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question, please.

Mr Shea: — "did I ask what now seems to me a pressing question: Will this money come from taxes, or will we borrow it from Japan?"

Minister, the arts and culture community is having a hard time making the transition from the —

The Speaker: Put the question. Member for High Park-Swansea, order. The Minister of Culture.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): In response, what I would really like to say is that we as a government do recognize that culture really is the foundation of our identity, not just as a province, but I believe it defines us as a country. With that in mind, given the economic reality of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, I want to assure the honourable member that my ministry has been working very closely with the cultural community to

identify ways in which they can become more self-sufficient and also to help it to develop new partnerships with the private sector to locate new sources of revenue.

Mr Shea: Robert Fulford is a distinguished columnist with the Globe and Mail. In light of his comments and in light of your response, can you suggest, for example, ways that the communities may well respond to the shortfalls in dollars from the government? Have you been pursuing issues of joint-venturing? Are you taking a look at other kinds of possibilities for the arts communities to get involved?

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Fort York, come to order, please.

Hon Ms Mushinski: As a part of the budget, my honourable colleague Mr Eves introduced a refundable tax credit for film and television production. I'd just like to share with you some of the comments I have received as a result of that particular announcement. From Insight Productions, Mr John Branton, the president: "The program will foster employment and economic growth within the television industry." From Owl Communications: "We also appreciate the collaborative way you have worked with the industry to draft solutions that both support the government's cost-cutting program and provide ways to keep the industry vital."

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Ms Mushinski: Finally, I would like to read the following from Hansard: "The programs on-film development: Clearly that is a growth industry, one that we all want to encourage. It is a unique industry that I think" —

The Speaker: The question has been answered. Minister, thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, order. Take your seat, please, Minister. Stop the clock. I would remind members that when the Speaker is standing, you take your seat. It's not in order to be standing when the Speaker is in his place.

NURSING STAFF

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Today the Ontario Nurses' Association filed an injunction to prevent the layoff of 387 registered nurses at the Toronto Hospital. These layoffs represent about 15% of the hospital's nursing complement. They say in their press release, "Nurses want the public to know that the level of care will suffer with the continued slashing of front-line care providers as hospitals seek to cut their budgets."

You know their budget cuts are in response to the \$1.3 billion that you are taking from those hospital budgets. The registered nurses working at the Toronto Hospital are saying very clearly that patient care is in jeopardy, that patient care is being harmed. The Ontario Nurses' Association says that in this press release, says that patient care is suffering and will continue suffering unless you do something.

As Minister of Health, I'm asking you to do two things.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want one question now.

Mrs Caplan: Will you use the authority that you have to investigate this situation and to declare a moratorium to stop the layoffs of those people who, in your own words, provide care?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The member is in error. I have no authority to interfere. Nor would it be prudent, wise or fair for a member of the crown to interfere in an employee-employer relationship, particularly when an injunction has been filed with the court. I have no comment on this matter.

Mrs Caplan: I anticipated the minister's answer. In fact, you have the authority.

(1) You have it from Bill 26.

(2) The Ministry of Health Act specifically requires and obliges you as Minister of Health to investigate when you are given information that patient care is in jeopardy.

(3) A report that was given to you in June 1996 from the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council says, on page 49, as follows, "HPRAC recommends that there be an investigation of the public interest implications of the utilization of health care aides and other generic workers in all health care settings."

This gives you the authority and the responsibility to investigate. You're the one who's cutting \$1.3 billion. You're the one who's hurting patient care. You must intervene and declare a moratorium on nurses who deliver that care being laid off.

Hon Mr Wilson: The only authority contained in the Public Hospitals Act — and Bill 26 is a red herring with respect to the member's question — is if there's concrete evidence of a question of harm to quality in a hospital. I have received no evidence from that hospital or from these nurses with respect to that, so there is no basis on which to launch an investigation under the Public Hospitals Act.

I would remind the honourable member that this is a very serious matter. There has only been, to my knowledge, about two inquiries or investigations or supervisors appointed in the last 10 to 15 years. For the minister to use that section of the act, you need concrete evidence that patient quality is suffering. We don't see that evidence. We see surgeries increasing and we see administrative dollars being driven to front-line services. We don't have any evidence that the quality is suffering in that institution or any other institution in this province.

1450

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's with regard to the support grants to northern municipalities. Your government is really confusing the mayors and reeves of northern Ontario. In meetings with you and your officials, you're telling them that support grant is toast, it's history, and yet on Thursday night last in Sault Ste Marie the Premier said:

"They're wrong. I'm from the north. We respect the differences in northern Ontario. We're asking all the governments to do with less. Quite frankly, in northern Ontario bureaucracy in school boards and municipalities is already leaner than some. We have some different

needs. I don't think they need to fear. We have applied the same rules here in northern Ontario as we might in Toronto."

I guess that says to them that they've got the Premier here in northern Ontario, with or without David Crombie. "I have personally given my commitment." I would think that would be more important. What is it? Is it yes or is it no? Is it toast or is it on? They want to know.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm sure the Premier has never misled the people of northern Ontario before and he has not now.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You're saying that the Premier would not mislead the people of northern Ontario. I wonder then, who is? I have a letter here, dated September 27, addressed to His Worship Mayor Vic Power and it's signed by Al Leach. The letter says: "I appreciate hearing your delegates' accounts of the special circumstances northern municipalities face that have a bearing on their ability to manage further transfer reductions. Unfortunately" — the key word — "I have to confirm that municipal support grant programs will be again substantially reduced." I ask the same question as my colleague: Is it you or is it the Premier who is confused on this matter? Come clean.

Hon Mr Leach: I think everybody knows there will be further reductions to the municipal block grants. That has nothing to do with whether there will be a special northern support grant or not. If the Premier indicated that there'll be a northern support grant, there will be a northern support grant.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. As this is the first opportunity I have had to address the minister, I'd like to congratulate him on his new appointment and wish him the best in the future.

It's good to see that more and more businesses these days are taking advantage of the technological advances available to them. Sales and marketing no longer require a personal touch; the same result can be reached over the phone or by fax. Telemarketing is a boom industry, but as always there are some who will take advantage of the system.

It's come to my attention that people in my riding, many of them elderly individuals, have been taken advantage of through telephone fraud. As an example, one individual was offered \$200 a month to stuff envelopes at home if they would only purchase the materials. They ordered and didn't receive. I've heard that this practice is fairly widespread across North America and I'd like to know what the government is doing to stop it.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Although there is a very large and legitimate telemarketing and direct marketing industry in Ontario, I am concerned, and I know members of this House are concerned, about the fraudulent scam artists who are preying upon seniors and the people who are vulnerable to this sort of thing.

We will be using every possible effective enforcement method that we have to crack down on these type of

unscrupulous scam artists. In fact, there's a program that's in operation now called Project Phonebusters, which is a joint effort among the OPP, the RCMP, certainly our ministry, the federal government, and also the private sector, the Canadian Bankers' Association and the Canadian Courier Association, in order to crack down on these particular types of telemarketing fraud. They have had a good effect already. In fact, over 1996 there has been a 40% reduction in this type of telemarketing fraud in the province of Ontario.

Mr Bert Johnson: It's good to know that the government is ensuring that vulnerable individuals will be looked after. I would also like to commend you on your cooperation with other provinces in this matter.

Interjections.

Mr Bert Johnson: If the people of Lake Nipigon have no problem with this, at least their member should.

Can you tell us what issues of importance to the province of Ontario were discussed at the meetings and what your fellow consumer ministers agreed on?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I did have the opportunity to co-host the first conference for interprovincial ministers of consumer protection in about a decade, along with Martin Cauchon from the federal government. What did come out of this was an opportunity to have a lot of cooperation across the country and also with the federal government in order to do a lot for consumer protection. One of the examples would be the national standards for direct sales. Currently in Ontario it's only a two-day cooling-off period. We have agreed to try to institute a 10-day cooling-off period consistent across the country. This was a major improvement, and we are looking to have a lot of cooperation with the provinces and the federal government to do what we can for consumer protection.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the government House leader. My question involves the issue of video lottery terminals, or electronic slot machines as most people know them.

Minister, you have heard from several members of the opposition and from many people out in the public that this new venture into 20,000 video lottery terminals, electronic slot machines, in every bar and neighbourhood in the province of Ontario, every restaurant, is going to be detrimental. You have heard evidence that indeed there is going to be a lot of criminal activity potentially involved in this particular activity that's being sanctioned by your government in order to get more revenue to make up for your tax cut.

As government House leader, would you give an undertaking today in the House that you will withdraw the bill which would allow for video lottery terminals and rethink this whole issue?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): No, I will not give such an undertaking to the member opposite.

Mr Bradley: I am extremely disappointed, though not entirely surprised, although a bit surprised by the response.

May I ask you this then at this point: You have received considerable evidence. We have a report that we cannot get from you. We've made reference to this report from the police intelligence service which talks about widespread involvement of the criminal element in gaming in Ontario.

Minister, will you at least give an undertaking that you, as government House leader, will ensure that members of the opposition have available to them — and your own members — a form of this report in order that you can better make a judgement on whether you should proceed or not? I'm convinced you should not, but I believe you should at least provide this report to members of the opposition, having heard all the concerns that have been expressed.

Hon David Johnson: This report has been the topic of questions from the opposition ranks over the past several days. The Solicitor General has commented on this particular report. I can add no more to what the Solicitor General has commented.

The House leaders are in the process of arranging for the business that will come before the House, and all bills coming before this House will be part of that discussion. The member opposite, being the House leader for the Liberal Party, can make his points during the House leaders' meeting. I don't think there's anything else I can say on that particular issue.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, my question today to you is about your bad-boss bill, a bill that is receiving final debate and a third-reading vote, either today or a deferred vote, but today will be the last opportunity to speak publicly.

This bill takes away rights from working people. It's part of your ongoing effort to drive down working conditions and the standard of living of working families. It allows you to lay off one third of the employment standards enforcement officers as a result of the passage of Bill 49, your bad-boss bill. The only people who are going to benefit from this bill are the bad bosses that exploit workers.

1500

Minister, there was a news conference today in which the employment standards working group released the statistics on their bad-boss hotline. The reality is, vulnerable workers are being made more vulnerable by your changes to the Employment Standards Act. Why didn't you listen to the people who made submissions and told you the reality out there? Why didn't you listen to those workers?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I think it's very, very important that we set the record straight right now. As you know, Mr Speaker, our legislation does not affect any of the minimum standards that are already there. In fact, what our bill does is offer the protection to the vulnerable workers that has not been there in the past. We are going to streamline enforcement. We are going to make sure that people get the money that is owed to them much more quickly, because unfortunately you got rid of

the collection agency within the employment standards branch. You forced the present employment standards officers to not only issue orders but also collect money. Then, I would add, also, it was your government that laid off 198 people in the past five years from the employment standards branch and the occupational health and safety branch. So talk about layoffs; you laid off 198 people and you've reduced funding by \$42 million.

BROADCAST AND RECORDING SERVICE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I wonder if you were aware that this is the 10th anniversary of the Broadcast and Recording Service of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Perhaps members would like to pay tribute to those who provide this service for the people of this province.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 43 and 44.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My office received another 1,200 signatures on the same petition as I've presented all this week to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two Sudbury acute care hospitals; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury hospitals."

I affix my signature to it.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition here from members of my community and it's in three

languages, in English, Chinese and Vietnamese, I believe. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not make government cuts to housing, particularly those to the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority. They place too much burden on seniors and those who can least afford them; and

"Restore access to medical treatment by abolishing the co-payment to the Ontario drug benefit program. Respect our seniors."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I have a petition for the Legislature. The petition is one of many to end the spring bear hunt. Bear with me as I read the "whereases."

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition from constituents of my riding and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly. I'd like to read it.

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to remove rent controls; and

"Whereas the removal of rent control legislation breaks a campaign promise made by the Conservatives during the election; and

"Whereas a great number of tenants are seniors and people on fixed incomes, and many have had their incomes cut by 22% due to social assistance cuts and cannot afford increases in their rent; and

"Whereas growing unemployment and the scarcity of affordable housing in Metro makes the removal of rent control an even greater disaster for tenants and for people who cannot afford to buy homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario keep its pre-election promise and not remove rent controls, and continue with

the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Rental Housing Protection Act."

I concur with the contents and I will affix my signature to it.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I've got a petition here signed by 200 people from Orde Street Parent Council. They want to be included in any changes that are made to the educational system as part of the decision-making process and they're arguing here against cutbacks to education.

The Orde Street Parent Council is opposed to the \$1-billion cutback to Ontario's education system. More is slated to come out and they're very concerned about that.

The education minister's proposed budget sheet, found in his paper Meeting Students' Needs, ignores the needs of special education. It omits programs that are essential to the educational day of all students: A library staff by a teacher-librarian, music and arts instruction, physical education by a qualified teacher and the supervised lunch program.

They're very worried about the reintroduction of streaming and they're very concerned about the secretive discussions of the complete overhaul of education to be finalized by November 30, 1996.

I affix my signature to their concerns.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding and from the member for Carleton's riding with respect to the spring bear hunt.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

1510

DEREGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition from a number of people in the province of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans to introduce deregulation by taking jobs away from inspectors whose responsibilities had included protecting health, safety, the environment and consumers; and

"Whereas deregulation will mean the watering down of important standards within the sphere of business, allowing less ethical competitors to take advantage, having a detrimental effect on the consumers of this province; and

"Whereas the gutting of the Ministry of the Environment will mean that the investigations and enforcement branch will no longer be able to carry out its responsibilities preventing polluters from damaging the environment of this province; and

"Whereas the deregulation legislation represents the abdication by the Progressive Conservative Party of the most important responsibilities of a government, to preserve and protect the people of this province and the lands and waterways on which they live;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its destructive ideological agenda and introduce legislation which will protect the consumers of this province and preserve the natural habitat in which we live and wish to preserve for future generations to come."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with it.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by approximately 25 residents of the township of Laird, whose children used to attend Tarbutt Central school. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, want our children to be bused and attend the Laird school as an alternative to attending Johnson school and being placed in portable classrooms."

I affix my signature to it.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario concerning drinking and driving, and I note the first two signature are Bruce and Shirley George, who have played a very large role in fighting drinking and driving in Ontario.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives, while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail, and even then, only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I fully support this petition and therefore affix my name to it.

PROVINCIAL SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's list of PST-exempt purchases regarding native Indians presently discriminates against Ontario Indians living off reserves because of educational purposes, medical reasons and unsettled land claims;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass amending legislation to allow Indians living off reserves for educational purposes, medical reasons and unsettled land claims to be included in the PST exemption policy."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have one that reads as follows, signed by a number of people in different municipalities in Ontario:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into considering the closing of local hospitals; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for years to come; and

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that in most areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition supplied to my office by residents of my riding. It's a bit long, but I'm going to read it to the Speaker.

"Whereas the government is intent on cutting educational funding so that children are denied their basic right to quality education; and

"Whereas the government cuts to day care facilities restrict parents' access to affordable and decent child care programs within the province; and

"Whereas the Harris government is intent on abolishing rent controls, and the rent-geared-to-income program, which provides decent housing for low- and middle-income tenants, consisting of 40% seniors, 42% families and 18% special needs and disabled tenants; and

"Whereas the government has introduced user fees on basic necessities such as prescription medication for seniors, textbooks for school children and essential services like firefighting and policing; and

"Whereas the cuts to services will impact upon everything from public transit to borrowing library books; and

"Whereas the government has seen fit to abandon job training programs and failed to create a formal job strategy for the province despite continually high unemployment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly and the Mike Harris government to live up to their promises of protecting rent control, to not introduce any further user fees, and creating over 725,000 jobs in the province."

I have to agree with the contents of the petition, and I'm going to sign my signature to it.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to rescind Bill 181.

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario;

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape;

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced do not track criminals;

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in one day, without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions;

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the use of illegal ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I affix my signature to this.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for so many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations,

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature, as I am in agreement, and hand this to Trevor Nelson, a page from Ferndale school in St Catharines.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BETTER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES ADMINISTRATIONS LOCALES

Mr Leach moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to provide for better local government by updating and streamlining the Municipal Elections Act, the Municipal Act and related statutes / Projet de loi 86, Loi prévoyant l'amélioration des administrations locales en modernisant et simplifiant la Loi sur les élections municipales, la Loi sur les municipalités et d'autres lois connexes.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mrs Witmer, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à améliorer la Loi sur les normes d'emploi.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I believe there is unanimous agreement to have the member for Hamilton Centre start the debate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there unanimous consent to have the member for Hamilton Centre begin the debate? Agreed.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to rise and comment on the last opportunity that the public will have to say anything through their representatives on this piece of legislation that, quite frankly, is a direct attack on the rights that working women and men have in the province of Ontario in the Employment Standards Act, as minimum as they may be, because this government has an agenda. That agenda is to water down the rights and standard of living of working families and it's also to remove the rights and

protection that workers have in the workplace. This bill is just a continuation of that process. We've seen it from the outset. Every piece of legislation this government has brought in that pertains to workers, the workplace, rights that working people have, we see a relentless attack on those rights and we see a litany of rights that have been taken away by this government.

We know that we had two in our party. We had to lead the fight to force this government to even take Bill 49 out into the public arena, because when the minister introduced this bill she said: "Nobody needs to worry about it. This is strictly housekeeping, a few minor changes, a little bit of nuts-and-bolts work, nothing that anybody needs to worry about." In fact, she told that to a group of Ontario labour leaders the week before she introduced it when she was meeting with them on another issue, and conveniently they were out of the province when this bill was dropped. When we got a look at it and saw what indeed was in this bad-boss bill — because that's what it is; it's a bill for bad bosses — when we saw the things that were being taken away, the rights that workers have, it was very clear that this was not a minor housekeeping bill; this was a major attack on the rights of working people. I'll say this: In particular, people who don't have benefit of a union were the greatest losers, because for them the Employment Standards Act is their bill of rights. That's all they have.

Now your government is taking away rights by virtue of these amendments. So it's not a wonder that you didn't want to take it out into the public domain. You fought us tooth and nail for days, refusing to take Bill 49 out into the public, because you stood behind the charade, the sham that somehow this was just housekeeping. When we finally forced this government to take Bill 49 out on the road over the summer, exactly what we predicted happened: We had dozens and dozens and dozens of representatives of workers, of vulnerable workers themselves coming forward, of labour leaders. The vast majority of people who came out and spoke were against the bill. The government couldn't even muster enough support from their corporate cronies to give a decent defence of Bill 49. You were slaughtered out in the public arena in every community that we went out to.

That is exactly what you were afraid of and that's exactly why you didn't want to take Bill 49 out into the public domain. I suspect that's why you're still refusing to commit to take your WCB legislation out on the road, for the same reason. You have the same fear: You know that under the glaring scrutiny of public review all of your best spin doctors' lines fall apart.

I've made this point on numerous occasions. Again, in this piece of legislation, as you've done with others, we see the charade — there are stronger words I'd like to use, but they're unparliamentary — but the charade of naming this An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act is as insulting as you saying that you were improving the environment legislation when you were decimating protection of the environment that had been developed over decades.

You still had the audacity to call that an improvement and now you call this an improvement. The only improvement in this bill is for bad bosses. There's

nothing in here that helps people be good bosses, there's nothing in here that helps those who are good bosses. But boy, if you're pretty comfortable exploiting workers, denying them their rights, then this is a field day for you because the message will now go out that there's less and less chance that, first of all, you're even violating a law because they've been watered down and, secondly, if you have, there's less chance that you're going to be caught because this government is laying off a third of the enforcement officers.

I want to focus for one moment, even though it's not in the bill now, on one piece that was in there and it's very important because we know it's going to come back. One of the things that was in that bill, this minor housekeeping, was something they called "flexible standards." What they wanted to do with that piece of the legislation was allow collective agreements to contain less than the minimum standards in hours of work, public holidays, overtime, vacation pay and severance pay.

They did this, or they were going to do it — and they still say they're going to consider it in their year-long review — by saying as long as the collective agreement has a greater right at the end of the day, that by juggling these things that somehow — and we don't know how it's defined because the bill didn't say that, it didn't say how it would be determined — but as long as there were greater rights overall than there were before, that would be okay.

Well, if we had not forced this government into public hearings, then this government would have already passed that part of the bill into law along with the rest of it because they tried to ram this through last June. It was only because we forced them out into public hearings that they backed off on this one piece and in fact made some other amendments that improved the bill, because they rushed it.

This clause, this "flexible standards," is a dangerous, dangerous road for this government to walk down. Now, because it hurts working people, you don't care. That's obvious. But I'll tell you, for the people who do represent and who do care about working people, they were very upset about that clause because what it would allow at the end of the day is a collective agreement for the first time in the history of Ontario to contain rights that are less than those established in law.

You can't do that right now. You cannot sign a collective agreement and enforce a collective agreement that has rights in there that are less than workers already have in legislation. But the clause that you wanted to introduce would have made that legal.

Now that you've also made it legal to bring in scabs, you've made it that much easier for employers to take on unions, to beat them down, to take away the rights that workers are entitled to. This is what you're doing. In having strikes like that and having a clause that allows rights to be put in place that are less than the law provides, you slowly begin the process of removing a bottom, a floor, a minimum standard that someone could point to and say: "That's the absolute minimum, no matter what. Whether I've got a collective agreement or not, those are my rights." That clause would have allowed, over a period of time, for those rights to be

taken away. The minister even talked in a scrum about the possibility of having these flexible standards concepts in workplaces that don't have a union, that have no collective agreement.

1530

That begs some questions. Either the minister didn't know what she was speaking of when she answered the questions in the scrum, and I assume she knows what she's talking about — she should — or this government is looking at some other means to allow collective decisions to take place in the workplace without a bona fide union, without the decision by those workers to join a union and bargain collectively. There now is this idea that somehow there can be a collective voice expressed that might have allowed this to come in. I'm not going to go on at great length about that today because that was removed. It was removed as a result of the public outcry that took place after we forced you to take Bill 49 public, so right away workers have won at least one small victory. But the government is still planning to take a year to review the Employment Standards Act further. This isn't the end of it.

I can't believe there's anybody in this province who believes that when the Mike Harris Tories change legislation affecting workers, somehow workers are going to win that, that they're going to come out better, because with every single piece of legislation you've brought in that deals with working people you have taken away rights; you haven't improved anything.

I want to move to some of the worst aspects of this "housekeeping" bill. Bear in mind that's how they framed this, that it was just minor housekeeping. One of the things in this bill is the concept, the idea that you have to have been robbed of a certain level of money. We don't know what that level is because they won't tell us. You have to cross a certain threshold. You have to have been ripped off for \$50 or \$75 or \$100 or \$200 to have the Ministry of Labour enforce your rights. Right now there's no minimum. If a bad boss beats you for \$100 and you're making minimum wage, that \$100 is a lot of money. The law says that if you're owed that money, the employer has to pay it, and if they don't, the ministry will step in and enforce that right, as they should.

Under this bill the cabinet will have the right to regulate an amount under which the government will not enforce your rights. Keep in mind that they won't tell us what it is. One of their answers is, "We're not going to do it right away." Well, that's really comforting. We heard that same argument with the omnibus Bill 26, another bill you didn't want people to look at in the public domain. One of your answers at the time was, "We're not necessarily going to use all the powers we're giving ourselves," and of course we saw even today in question period that that is what is happening. Why else would you put it in there?

You're going to give yourselves the power, as a cabinet, in regulation — meaning no need to have public debate; it's all done in the cabinet room, and as we know, cabinet meetings take place behind closed doors — to set a minimum level, and if it's less than that, what's the answer? "Go to court." At a time when the Attorney General tells us that the courts are all clogged and that he

has to take action to make the system work better and he's removing some things from the court process, the answer to vulnerable workers who have been ripped off for money they're legally entitled to is, "Go to court."

First let's look at whom we're talking about. In most cases we're talking about workers who don't have a union to fight to get the money that's owed them. In many cases we're talking about people who are making minimum wage, working in the worst conditions, working in some cases — this is a case example, a profile of the kinds of people, the types of workers who would need this law. They're likely to be women, there's a good chance English will not be their first language, and it's in those conditions that you're now saying to that worker, "Take your boss to court." It costs almost \$70 to file the papers to go to court, so if it's \$50 you've been ripped off for, you're beat for that money. Who the hell is going to pay \$70 to collect \$50? Since you won't enforce their right, because you've changed the law, that worker is beat.

It was interesting during the hearings, on the same point, that a group of very courageous workers — I think they're very courageous, because as much as the government promised there would be no retaliation, people are people — the workers themselves, who are the employment standards officers, and they're members of OPSEU Local 546, came forward and made a submission. They talk in here about how they see the changes to this law. These are the actual working women and men who enforce the law. It would be expected that they know what they're talking about. What did they say about the new minimum? I'm quoting:

"With regard to employees who handle cash, for example" — such as waitresses/waiters, gas station attendants, cashiers etc — "every six months, an employer could automatically deduct \$50 from an employee's paycheque for cash shortages — twice a year. The employer could deduct moneys under the minimum amount every six months. It's a new double standard for the employer — an outright licence to steal."

That's from the people whose job it is to enforce the employment standards, and that's what they say about the clause that will set a minimum. In effect, those workers are going to be beat for the money that they're owed, and it will continue. Why would it stop? The most unscrupulous of employers could sit down, as they suggest, and create a system where they regularly beat employees for an amount below the minimum and do it every six months, because you're changing that law too. Workers can't go back the two years they now can under the Employment Standards Act; you're going to make it only six months. The worst employers, the real bad bosses out there, are going to have a field day as a result of this change to the Employment Standards Act. That's at the minimum end of money that's owed.

Flip it over. What about a maximum, where there isn't a maximum right now? If you're owed money, whatever it is, you're entitled to get that money from the employer that legally owes it to you. Under this law if it's over \$10,000 that's not true, and if it's under the minimum that you won't tell us the level of, you're beat there too. What's the answer to those people who are owed over \$10,000? Guess. "Go to court."

1540

The government, I assure you, will stand in their place today and say this is only affecting executive level incomes. I assure you that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour will be making that point, and if he doesn't, he'll have one of his colleagues do it, because that's the argument they're standing behind on that.

It's interesting. What did that same group of employment standards officers have to say? Currently, the Employment Standards Act "does not have a ceiling on claims. Bill 49 proposes to limit the dollar amount of the claim to \$10,000. The ministry's reasoning, as noted in report" — the Expenditure Reduction Strategy Report, 1996-1998 — "is to lower the caseload, as higher-paid employees would use civil action to collect. The assumption must be that when employees file claims in excess of \$10,000 they are higher-paid employees. This is not so."

These weren't the only people to comment on that. We had many submissions proving the point that it's not only the higher-paid who will be affected by this change. And you know, what is particularly galling through all this is that the minister today, even as late as today, stood in her place when I asked her a question and said that this bill doesn't reduce anybody's rights, doesn't take anything away.

I still fail to see how you can deny someone the right to have the ministry go into your workplace and confront an employer and force them to pay you money you're owed. I fail to see how having that right taken away is not a reduction in rights in law. I fail to see how you can argue that today you can make a claim for \$12,000, if that's what's owed to you, but after this bill passes you can't, how that is not taking away someone's rights. And all of this was under the guise of minor housekeeping. This isn't even their main event, this isn't the real draw, this isn't the big show; that one's going to come at the end of a year-long review.

Another thing they're doing: Right now, as I mentioned earlier, you can go back two years to make a claim. The government, again I assure you, you will hear say today that if they can move on these cases more quickly — because they're reducing it to six months and they're saying that will force employees to claim sooner, and that by having the information sooner, just like a detective hot on the trail because that trail is warmer and it's not two years old, it's only six months old, they'll be able to resolve them that much quicker. They'll argue that by doing that they're also preventing this boss from ripping off someone else. I guarantee you, that argument is coming. We heard it in every community and it was smashed to pieces in every community.

What is the truth? The truth is that 90% of all claims are made after an employee leaves that place of employment. Why is that so? The reality is that most of those people are too terrified for their job to make a claim against their employer, bearing in mind that in most cases we're talking about someone who is a bad boss to start with. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to think about what it must be like in that workplace and how you are going to be affected when your boss finds out you just laid a claim against them with the Ministry of Labour.

What happens is that most people wait until they've found another job, which can take some time, particularly if you're not a skilled worker and you're at an entry level job and you're making minimum wage. It may take you a while to secure another job. The unemployment rate just went up in this province, thanks to this government. It's getting tougher to find jobs. So people wait until they have the security of a job and then they lay the claim, because the boss can no longer get at them.

Under the current law, you can go back two years and there's no limit. That makes sense. Now this government is saying, "No, you can't go back the two years; you can only go back the six months." In effect, what you're going to do is allow the bad bosses to outright steal from an employee in a situation like that. You're allowing it.

I submit to you that by passing this law and letting it be known that this is the new law, you will be encouraging more bad bosses to do just that, because they know the law isn't there to go after them and there won't be the enforcement officers there to go after them. With the unemployment rate going up and you dismantling decent-paying jobs in this province so that everybody works at minimum wage, which is what you want because that makes everything nice and competitive, that's going to leave the impression with those bad bosses that it's fair game to go after your employees, if that's the kind of person you already are. We know they're out there. They're not everywhere, but there are enough of them.

The Employment Standards Work Group, later with the Ontario Federation of Labour, opened up a province-wide bad-boss hotline. Today they issued a news release that talked about the findings: 12% of the people who were calling, using the anonymity of this hotline, were being paid less than the minimum wage.

Our minimum wage is already lower than the American minimum wage. The whole idea that we have a better society and that we treat those less well-off better than they do in the States is not true under this government. Even the States just raised their minimum wage. Interestingly, the Republicans, of course, who are the American cousins of the Mike Harris Reform-Tories, opposed it, just like you're opposing it here. Our minimum wage is already below that of the United States, and 21% of the people who phoned said they were being paid less than the minimum wage.

With fewer enforcement officers in the ministry to enforce these rights, and with your new minimum and maximum limits, where does that leave those workers? It leaves them out in the cold.

What else? That was, 12% were being paid less than minimum wage; 21% complained about unpaid wages. God help them if they haven't been stolen from high enough to cross the minimum but low enough under the new maximum, because if they have, they're out of luck. Twenty-one per cent about excess hours of work: That's the law that you wanted to allow lowered in some collective agreements. There would be no concept of maximum hours of work in a workweek. That concept you don't want any more.

Forty-one per cent of the calls were about unpaid vacation pay, money that workers are owed legally and morally. Any way you want to look at it, they're owed

that money. You're going to make it more difficult for them to get the money they're legally entitled to. What happened to the party of law and order? Law and order for some; for everybody else, too bad.

1550

Forty-two per cent called about being terminated without just cause or unpaid termination and severance pay. Eighty per cent called about arbitrary reduction of hours or abusive employers. They've issued a book: *Bad Boss Stories — Workers Whose Bosses Break the Law*. They give case studies.

This is what's happening out there. That's the reality of what some people live through day to day. You can deny it. You can put your head in the sand. You can help those who exploit those people. But you cannot change the reality just because you say this is an act to improve the Employment Standards Act. This is the reality for far too many Ontarians. What we're talking about is your government taking away the minimum rights that the most vulnerable workers in our province have and you call them minor housekeeping. In fact, your Minister of Labour still stands there and says that black is white when she says that this bill does not take away rights. Of course it takes away rights. That's why you didn't want to take it out on the road. That's why you're taking another year to review the Employment Standards Act in its totality. You are taking away workers' rights, just as you did in your anti-worker Bill 7, where you made it much more difficult for people to democratically choose to join a union — and didn't campaign on, had no mandate, and didn't hold any public hearings on Bill 7, by the way, not one day. You took away the successorship rights for public sector workers but still left them there for private sector workers, just took them away from public sector workers, because part of your game plan under all this privatization is to eliminate those decent-paying jobs in the public sector where people are performing a service for the rest of the workers in Ontario and you're going to sell it off to your friends in the private sector and they're going to pay minimum wage. For those who are bad bosses you've just made it easier for them to exploit some people. That's what you're doing.

I don't know how many backbenchers have taken the time to read this or have taken the time to read the Hansards in terms of what people in your community were saying about this bill when we went out on the road, but if you did, I suspect there's got to be somewhere in that horde of right-wing ideologues some people with some compassion and understanding about what it must be like to be one of the most vulnerable workers in this province. Quite frankly, most people assume that their rights are in there and if they have a good boss and are making a decent wage the Employment Standards Act is not something they think about very often, unless of course something changes and they're being ripped off. Then they're going to say, "Clearly, the law wouldn't allow the employer to do this to me, so I'll just pick up the phone and call the Ministry of Labour and get this straightened out." That's not going to happen for a lot of people.

At the end of the day, and I speak very directly to the backbenchers, you can hide in this House now but you're going to have to go out there eventually and there's still a whole hell of a lot more working people than there are rich people and you're going to have to answer for your agenda and you're going to have to answer for the attack that you are now encouraging some people to launch against the most vulnerable. That's the reality. I don't care and I don't think you should care whether it's 5,000, 50,000 or 10 workers; if there's any worker who's being exploited by their boss, they have a right to have the government protect their rights and step in and make things right. You're changing that law. You're taking away rights that workers have and you're making it more difficult for people to have their rights — whatever few rights are left over when you're done — enforced.

The changes that you've made to WCB: Out the window goes your promise about not hurting disabled people. Somehow workers who are hurt on the job, they don't count. You've already taken away the right of workers to have a 50% say in how the WCB is run through Bill 15; that's already gone. Now, based on the leaked cabinet document that I brought in the House last week and made public, you're going to take away 5% of the income of disabled workers, and you're going to give a 5% gift to your corporate buddies by cutting their premiums.

You said, under the guise of cost cutting, that you're going to open up the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We know that the right to refuse unsafe work is on the line. You are attacking literally every aspect of law that determines what happens to working people, every one of them. In the process, you're gutting the Ministry of Labour. Just the other day the library at the Ministry of Labour was shut down. I know you moved it over to a university or some other place and said it's available to people, but the reality is that everything you're doing takes away one more piece of a worker's right and transfers that power to people who already have the lion's share of money and power in this province.

Again, we're going to hear from the parliamentary assistant about how this is about efficiencies and it's to make things run better, and oh, you're going to hear this great, glorious story of what it's going to do. But the reality is very different. They knew that that reality would be told when we went out across the province. That's why they didn't want to have the public hearings. That's why they won't yet commit to hold public hearings on your WCB legislation.

Let me put you on notice right now. If you think we put up a firestorm over Bill 49 to get public hearings, you ain't seen nothin' yet if you try to put that WCB legislation through without province-wide public hearings. Don't say you weren't told ahead of time, and don't say the issue is cloudy; it's all very clear. At this stage, we're making it very clear to this government that nothing less than province-wide public hearings on your WCB legislation is an absolute bottom line.

You'll fight it, I suspect. You'll lose. We will end up with province-wide public hearings. On Bill 7, I had to go out and do them myself. I went out, as the labour critic for the NDP, and I went across the province. I gave

people a chance to have their say on Bill 7. Through the media, we talked about what you did to working people. So, at the very least, that's coming. But that's not good enough.

People have a right to have their say. On Bill 26, you tried to stop them. We've had an ongoing battle over public hearings around the rent control legislation. You tried to ram this piece of legislation through with no public hearings. Every step of the way you take things away from people and then you try to deny them at least their democratic right to have a say. So I want to again tell this government that you will have to ensure that workers get their say when you change the WCB.

1600

For anyone who doesn't understand the issues around the Employment Standards Act but you do know about the WCB and its legislation, then listen to me very clearly when I suggest to you that the same flowery discussion about, "The Jackson report is going to help disabled workers, and what workers really want is more streamlining and efficiency and that's why we're doing this," people who know will tell you that's not the truth. I'm saying that under this piece of legislation — you can call it An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act from now until doomsday and it's not going to change the fact that you're doing the opposite. That's what you've done with WCB; that's what you're going to do with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the health clinics. Workers' health clinics are on the block. The Workplace Health and Safety Agency is already gone. The Occupational Disease Panel is heading for the door. You're going to bury that, put it back inside the WCB.

All of these things add up. You seem to think, you seem to believe that you can go an entire term dismantling piece by piece workers' rights, rights around the environment, support mechanisms for the most vulnerable, dismantling our health care system. You seem to think that you can do all these things and nobody's going to notice, that they're all going to believe that you did wonderful things because, look at the bill, it's called An Act to improve. You seem to think that that's going to carry the day. Well, it's not. It didn't on Bill 49. In every community that we went to the overwhelming majority of people came out and trashed your bill and provided ample evidence that it is taking away rights, rights that workers now have.

I see a backbencher there shaking his head, going uh-uh. Yes. It's true. The fact of the matter is that there are rights that working people have today and when this law is passed, they won't have those rights. What part of this don't you get?

The fact of the matter is that you're putting a minimum in place that didn't exist before and if you happen to have been stolen from for less than that minimum, tough luck. You won't tell us what that minimum is, by the way. Keep that in mind. We still don't know what that minimum is. You just have the power to give yourselves one. If you're owed more than \$10,000, you're out of luck too. If you've been ripped off for longer than six months, too bad. So it doesn't matter how much you want to sit there and shake your head like this and wave your arms in the air; the fact of the matter is

that those are rights, identifiable rights, that working people now have in the Employment Standards Act, which is the workers' bill of rights, and you're taking them away. It's that straightforward. It's just as straightforward as listening to the hypocrisy of your social services minister stand up and talk about caring about the most vulnerable when one of your first acts was to take 22% of the income away from the poorest of the poor.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Do you believe what you're saying?

Mr Christopherson: I absolutely believe what I'm saying. The member — which member is that? Brant-Haldimand? What's your riding?

Mr Rollins: Quinte.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Quinte hollers out, "Do you believe what you're saying?" Absolutely. I absolutely believe every word that I'm saying because I happen to believe that if you look at the record, it speaks for itself. That is my opinion, but I think it can be backed up by a whole lot of people who know more about these things than you and know more about them than I. Go talk to the experts or read the Hansards. The fact of the matter is that you are taking these rights away.

The chambers of commerce came out and supported it; surprise, surprise. Some of them gave very thoughtful submissions, but they all supported it and they were all on the spot when I was asking them: "Do you honestly believe this doesn't take anything away from working people? Do you believe that?" In fact, there were a couple of representatives who were lawyers who were on the record as saying, "No, I cannot say that," and then would give their rationale, but the fact of the matter is that they would admit that rights were being taken away. That is why we get so enraged when the Minister of Labour stands up and says, "We're not taking away any rights."

I want to begin wrapping up my comments because we've only got one day of debate. There should be a lot more debate than this, but in order to get public hearings we had to cut a deal, and part of the deal was we would go out on the road in the province, but that on third reading there would only be one day. So this is it. And I have other colleagues who want to speak to this and add their important opinion to our debate.

Let me close my remarks by saying again — as I have said from the beginning of the term of this government, and I think I will be continuing to say it until the end of the term of this government — that every single piece of legislation you've brought forward that deals with working people has hurt working people and their families.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): What's hurting them is no jobs.

Mr Christopherson: That's what you're doing. I hear one of the members, Durham East, talk about jobs.

Mr O'Toole: A little guy. A little man.

Mr Christopherson: Oh yeah, you're the guy who defended all those GM workers. Don't think they won't forget.

You talk about jobs. First of all, take a look what happened in the last month in Canada. The majority of the job losses were right here in Ontario. You talk about

jobs. I say to you, what kind of jobs? What kind of jobs when you take away WCB, you take away health and safety rights, you take away rights in employment standards, you keep the minimum wage to a point where it's below the US? What kind of jobs? You're dismantling and privatizing a lot of good-paying jobs, and you seem to think that's fine. You don't realize that it's not just a job, but people are entitled to a decent job, a decent pay with decent wages and decent benefits.

You can nod your head and say yes, you agree, but I don't know why you're standing up and supporting all the legislation that does the opposite. You're making this a meaner place. You're giving to those who already have. There will always be injustices and unfairness, but you're feeding it, you're polarizing the province. Quite frankly, a lot of the changes that you're making may not matter if you're wealthy because you can afford a private health care system, or you can afford a private education system. But for most working families, without those things, they don't have hope for their kids, which next to their health I think is the most important thing for all of us who are parents. You're taking that away.

So when you start saying that all of this is about jobs, we will say to you consistently, number one, you're not creating the number of jobs you said you were going to, first of all. You're way off target, you're never going to reach your promise in the election of 725,000 jobs. And then we're going to say to you: What kind of jobs are these that are being created? Where we are getting new jobs, what are they? What kind of pay are they getting? What kind of benefits? What's the standard of living and the quality of life for those people?

Those are the kinds of questions we're going to be asking about things like changes to the Employment Standards Act, changes to our health care system, changes to our education system, changes to our social services safety net. All the things that are under attack by this government are the things we are going to counter-attack you on, because at the end of the day working people, ordinary working people and their families, are going to be worse off because you gained power in this province.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): They'll come after them too.

Mr Christopherson: Unfortunately. I wish it weren't so. But I have no doubt in my mind or my heart that that's exactly the reality facing people who are ordinary working folks just trying to get through day to day and raise their families. They're the ones who will pay the price, because they sure aren't the ones who are getting the benefit of your tax cut. That, of course, is the other main reason you say you're doing everything. It's jobs and a tax cut. Well, the fact is, unless you're very, very wealthy, you haven't received much of a tax cut at all.

That tax cut is, in large part, what's driving you gutting the Ministry of Labour, gutting the Ministry of Environment and Energy, gutting the Ministry of Health, gutting the Ministry of Community and Social Services. All those things because you've got to find the \$5 billion or \$6 billion you need to pay for the tax cut that your wealthy friends are going to benefit from, who are also the people who can afford to replace those things in their

lives because they have the money, because they're wealthy.

1610

So it all fits, if you're part of that nice little corporate wealthy world that most of you either live in or want to live in, but for the rest of the folks out there, that's not the reality. For those who are the most vulnerable, the absolute hardest-done-by people, first of all you attack them by cutting their meagre income by 22%, just a disgusting, disgraceful thing to do. How the hell you all sleep with yourselves, I'll never know, having done that to the poorest of the poor. Now, for those who have the crappiest jobs and work for the worst kinds of bosses, you've made it now easier for those kinds of people to continue to make their life terrible and now to make their life worse. That's who's affected by the Employment Standards Act. That's why we're so angry and that's why people who care and represent working people are so angry.

Then, on top of it all, you have the audacity to stand there and say this doesn't take away anybody's rights. That's the rub. That's the real insult, that while all this is going on, you still stand there and say, "Oh, no, we're not doing that."

Mr Speaker — Madam Speaker, sorry; I didn't realize the Chair had changed — I wish there was more time. We had to, as I said, hold the government's feet to the fire in order to get them to go out on public hearings in the first place. Part of the deal that was struck was there would only be one day of public debate on third reading of this bill, so that is indeed where we are today. The final vote, as I understand it, will happen on Monday, and then you will make this terrible piece of legislation, this attack on the workers' bill of rights, the law, and then you'll move on to your WCB legislation, where you're going to take away rights, to your overall review of the Employment Standards Act, where you're going to take away rights, to your opening of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, where I'm convinced you're going to take away workers' rights.

We may lose this battle, because you have the majority, you can make law whatever you choose, but I assure you that the overall war will be won by working people and those who represent them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I just wanted to congratulate my colleague on his presentation and indicate that because of his efforts, along with other members of the assembly, on the hearings on this piece of legislation, we now know that it is clear that there isn't one worker organization, not one union, not one member of any organization that works on behalf of working people in this province, that supports this legislation. There isn't one. The hearings demonstrated that there is almost complete unanimity on the part of the people who work in this province that this is a step backward — more than a step; a leap backwards.

I wonder why the government would persist in arguing that it is in fact moving forward when it's clear that as my colleague indicated, it was completely — I think the term he used was "massacred" in the hearings. I don't

understand why the Conservative government is not concerned about the fact that it did not get any support. I heard someone say there was a little less vitriol expressed about the government's intentions in Ottawa as compared to some of the other places, but —

Mr Pouliot: My chamber of commerce.

Mr Wildman: The chamber of commerce. I'm glad the chamber of commerce came and expressed its views, but what about the fact that this is a bill that the government purports to assist workers and there wasn't one worker or one organization that represents workers or works on behalf of workers that had anything good to say about this bill? I don't understand that. How is it the government is ignoring that unanimity?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions or comments?

Mr Pouliot: I thank you very kindly, Madame la Présidente. It's only my 12th year. By any stretch of the imagination it's not an extremely long tenure. What I am about to convey to you without bias or prejudice speaks of eloquence, of sincerity from the heart, and words come easily to my distinguished colleague the member for Hamilton Centre. It's easy; he's not faking sincerity. He tells it like it is. Those are the circles he treads. He's not extremely wealthy or consequential. Like members of our caucus, he's a person of moderate means, a person who treads the circles of union halls and respects their roots.

What is about to be done here is government by meat cleaver with an attitude systematically and deliberately taking a shot at the less fortunate, at workers, at your neighbours. My friends, you're fighting on too many fronts and you shall carry the guilt; mark my words. The sooner you can make a difference between Progressive Conservative and Reform, the better off you'll be individually and politically. You have scared the living daylights out of seniors. You're about to close hospitals. You're about to hand over as a tradeoff an additional 5% to make it 30%, in the end for people who need it the least, and the cost will be the human dimension.

Shame. I wish I could wish you well, but my friend has said it better than I can in his presentation and I thank him. Beware. They're coming in hordes to seek social justice.

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank my colleagues from Algoma and Lake Nipigon. I think all members will appreciate it's considered high flattery to have the member for Lake Nipigon say that he thinks you made a good speech. In terms of someone who finds words coming easily and eloquently, I don't think you're surpassed by anyone. I thank you for your comments.

I want to take a minute, since it's interesting that the government members chose to take a pass on this. There is an opportunity for them to take a two-minute shot in response, and usually they are quite eager to do so. It's curious that they all took a pass. Whatever could it mean?

In closing — this is normally where one would respond to those shots — let me say I think it's an important indication, as my colleague from Lake Nipigon has pointed out, that the overwhelming number of presentations in each community, sometimes by 80% or 90%, were opposed to this, but it's significant that you couldn't muster up more support for your side of the argument.

We all know that when you have public hearings the intent is, as political parties, to have your point of view confirmed. You do that, hopefully, through the kinds of witnesses who come in. It's important that not only are workers and their representatives, some union, some non-union, unanimous in their opposition to this and in their belief that it takes away rights of workers, it's also important to note that you couldn't muster up people to come out and defend your bill.

You certainly managed to get them when you attacked our Bill 40, when we were giving workers' rights, but now that you need someone to defend your attack on workers' rights you could hardly muster a soul. It's really easy to see why. They felt ashamed to try to defend your record.

1620

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): First I'd like to ask permission, as per agreement of the House leaders, that the following people and myself share the 90-minute lead, though it won't be 90 minutes, I assure you. It will be Caplan, the member for Oriole, Sergio, the member for Yorkview and Papatello, the member for Windsor-Sandwich, sharing the time with me.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Bradley: As I indicated, we don't expect to take the full amount of time, because we're on third reading now. Third reading really consists of why the government should not proceed to third reading and with third reading of the bill, and I would like to suggest why the government would not do so.

First of all I think we have to look a bit at the recent labour history of this province and why I think it is an unhealthy atmosphere. The agenda was set in the first fall session of the present administration when the government brought in Bill 7 and without very much consultation, with minimal consultation, without public hearings of any significant extent, rammed it through the Legislature. I must say that since then and since Bill 26, the omnibus bill, the huge bill that contained changes to about 45, 46, 47 different acts, the government has now I think recognized the importance of doing some additional consulting and having things go out to committee. If you want to know why labour was immediately so offended, it was because the government did not even consult. I'm not suggesting, to be realistic, that labour would have embraced the changes that were contemplated in the first labour bill that came forward from the government. It's very unlikely that would be the case.

However, I do think it's important that you hear from all sides when these issues come forward. What I'm concerned about is that dialogue is not taking place. If you said to virtually anybody in this province, "Does the Employment Standards Act need updating; does it need a public review?" I can't think of anybody who wouldn't say, "Yes, it does from time to time, to reflect the changing circumstances in the province."

Nevertheless what we have seen in terms of labour legislation is a complete rescinding of that which was brought forward by the previous government and replacing it with legislation that removes all those protections for working people in the province and at the same time adds items that are not favourable to labour.

I understand very well that business was not happy with the previous government's legislation. They indicated that during the hearings. The government made some modifications to their legislation, still not to the satisfaction of the people who were opposed to it.

I am somewhat concerned when that happens because I think it brings about a circumstance of continuous confrontation in the province. On the weekend of October 25 and 26 there are going to be major demonstrations taking place in Toronto; in fact on Friday the plans of many groups, labour being in the forefront, are in essence to bring the city of Toronto somewhat to a standstill.

This has not happened in years gone by. When Premier Davis was in power he would consult with labour groups, he would talk on a one-to-one basis with people, he would try to understand the viewpoints of all and then he would bring forward legislation. But that was the Progressive Conservative Party, that was not the Reform Party in power at the time. Now that we have the Reform Party in power at Queen's Park, we don't have that kind of consultation.

When the Progressive Conservatives under Premier Davis sat on that side not everybody on this side, from the Liberals and NDP, agreed with everything they did by any means. We fulfilled our responsibilities as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to point out the deficiencies in government policies, and the government members, as is their responsibility, defended those policies.

What I want to indicate to you is how important it was for Premier Davis to set up a consultation process. In fact, some of the pieces of legislation which people in labour considered to be progressive were a result of the Progressive Conservative government of William Davis. Some members of the opposition will tell you that Premier Davis was prepared to bring forward legislation with which labour sometimes disagreed, but sometimes with which labour found itself in agreement. His government did it only after significant consultation.

What we see now in the province is confrontation on a continual basis and a polarization taking place that I don't think is healthy for the province. If you want to pick a fight, you can pick a fight; there's no doubt about it. Sometimes if you're trying to appeal to a certain segment of the population, then it is very helpful to pick that fight politically, because it entrenches your position with those who believe that labour should be put down on every occasion.

But there are a lot of moderate, middle-of-the-road people out there, some of them in business, who look and say that it's not healthy for the province to have this continual confrontation. "We want some changes," they will say and they will look forward to a government to make the changes, but they won't look for the government to move so far to the other end of the spectrum that it's going to bring about continuous confrontation in the province.

We're always going to have people on either side — I understand that — who are the most radical, who will not be satisfied, if they're on the right wing or the left wing, with legislation that's brought forward, or policy changes or regulations. But you will find that many of the rank and file particularly and those who have had to work in

the milieu of labour relations can be accommodated — not always to their full satisfaction, but accommodated. Second, what's important is that people feel they have at least been heard, they've had their chance, their day in court to make their presentation. What happened with Bill 7 previously was that this didn't happen.

There has been some more consultation in this case through the hearing process, a rather extensive hearing process. As has been mentioned already by a previous speaker, that did not bring about unanimity by any means. Most of the people, at least from the labour end of things, I think all of them, expressed dissatisfaction with this legislation.

I know the government members have said that they have this in Saskatchewan and in British Columbia, where you have NDP governments, or other places where you have Liberal governments. They've noted that and said, "Don't you realize this is simply in synchronization with those provinces?" However, you have to look at this bill in the context of the previous legislation that the government brought in to see why labour sees this as yet another kick in the teeth to those who are involved in organized labour.

I guess not every aspect of this bill is contentious. There may be — there are — portions of this bill with which you would find some agreement, a good consensus. But there are parts of the bill also that are certainly not supportable by a large segment of the population.

The changes to the act should be aimed at giving greater protection to the most vulnerable workers in the province. These amendments do not do that. Those who are involved with organized labour who have strong unions representing them ordinarily are able, through the collective bargaining process and through the levers of power they have at hand, to bring about a collective agreement that is satisfactory. We see this happening all the time. Sometimes there is a strike that takes place, and that's almost inevitable in certain circumstances, but in the overwhelming number of cases you find that collective agreements are reached with a minimum of fuss and bother in terms of public confrontation.

That has to always be pointed out in this province, how many collective agreements are reached at the bargaining table, are ratified by the workers, are ratified by the employer, and we carry on in the province. Those agreements in recent years have certainly not been as lucrative as they had been in years gone by, because of the economic circumstances we face in the province. That is regrettable for some but certainly understandable in the total context of labour relations in the province.

1630

This bill does not enhance labour relations and it has some aspects that are certainly not going to be supportable by any fair-minded person. Who is going to be in favour of this? I would suspect that Conrad Black will be in favour of this. When I look at some of the things that are happening in the newspapers that are controlled by Conrad Black — and he now controls over half of the daily newspapers in Canada. I note that on occasion he has said he will not interfere in a newspaper; he's simply there to buy the newspaper. He's not worried about anything else; he's just going to buy the newspaper.

There was an article in the *Globe and Mail* recently, somewhere around October 1 or October 2, in which Conrad Black made rather disparaging remarks about the Southam branch of his empire. You can see that he has the power to carry out the firings that in his own mind he thinks are necessary.

Why you have labour concerned, why you have working people concerned, whether they're organized or unorganized employees in the province, is that they see corporations making unprecedented profits while at the same time shrinking the workforce. They understand very well, though they don't like it — nobody likes it — that there are layoffs when a company is losing a lot of money or when there's a general recession. Nobody likes that, but they understand it. What is difficult for most people in this province, including me, to accept is that a company makes unprecedented profits and then casts employees out into the street because somehow it enhances that company's position on the stock market. It causes a blip in the stock market, not sustained ordinarily, but it does cause the stock market to rise. Some of the corporate executives, since they are paid in part on that basis, find that they're better off if the stock rises. If this can be attained, despite the high profits, by throwing workers out into the streets, they seem to proceed with that.

I don't think most people want to see that happen. It's happening in the public sector, it's happening in the private sector, but it's happening extremely drastically. That's where the fear is. Right now we have a fight going on, or let's say a confrontation, in legal terms, between General Motors and the Canadian Auto Workers. You'll notice that the main matter of contention this time is not necessarily benefits and salaries and wages; what employees are concerned about now is security of jobs, and in this case contracting out. They are justifiably concerned about that.

In my own city of St Catharines, General Motors, just a few years ago, employed close to 10,000 people. Today they employ about 5,300 people in St Catharines. As a result of the negotiations by the union and the company, a lot of those people — probably close to all of the people — left with some kind of buyout package or bridge to pension, because that's what the CAW worked for, that's what Local 199 worked for in St Catharines. A lot of the people were accommodated that way; not everybody, but a lot of the people were accommodated that way.

If you looked at it, you'd say, "Well, people weren't hurt that badly." They were, in fact, because they were not allowed to carry on at their place of employment. But as important, those people look at the daughters and sons and where they are going to work. We also look, as a community, at the fact that with those people making a good wage and having good benefits at General Motors in St Catharines, they were able to spend money on goods and services in our community, and indeed in our province and our country. That helped buoy the economy, that helped to improve the economy, because these people were making those kinds of investments. When we go down to 5,300, we find it has a very significant impact on the community. There are also many suppliers

of General Motors in our community and other communities, and their jobs diminish as we see a reduction in the workforce. If anyone wonders why workers are prepared to walk the picket lines in many instances today, it's because of their worry about the jobs being lost.

In Brantford — someone will correct me if I'm wrong — there was a TRW closing that took place, with several hundred workers losing their jobs in that case. I know the member for Brantford and others would be concerned when that happens in the community, not only concerned for those people — of course, we are and should be — but also for the impact on other employees and other businesses. In terms of labour relations, that's what the discussions are about today.

In my own community, as a result of the collective bargaining that took place last time, we saved some 800 jobs. That is, the CAW went to General Motors and said: "As part of the collective agreement, the axle plant on Ontario Street in St Catharines, which employs some 800 people, will stay open. That's what we want in the agreement." General Motors wanted to sell that off and then purchase from someone else. There was an accommodation made which was acceptable to General Motors and to the CAW, and as a result those 800 jobs were preserved. Once again those 800 jobs are on the line. That is of great concern to me when I see that happening.

I mentioned the newspaper business and what's happening there. This tends to concern me very much because I see — I don't know how our labour laws can deal with this but I know that competition laws might deal with it — that one person is accumulating most of the newspapers in this country. I don't care who that person is or what that person's views happen to be: That is not healthy. In principle that is not healthy, when one person controls those newspapers.

Mr Conrad Black, who has had considerable experience in the newspaper business, is a person who has been successful in being able to gain control, not only of Hollinger corporation but through Hollinger and now the buying of shares in Southam, the Southam chain as well.

What are some of the things that have happened? One of the things that has happened that is quite obvious is that we've lost Canadian Press, or at least a portion of Canadian Press. It has survived but it has survived with considerable downsizing. There may be some people in this world who think that's great and would applaud that. I think of the individuals who lose their jobs as a result. I think of the significant role that Canadian Press has played — and I see people from various communities here — in bringing us together because those stories come out of the communities and we share them.

I'm often interested in what's happening, for instance, in New Brunswick or Newfoundland or the riding of Durham East and other places. Canadian Press used to bring that together; it represented an opportunity to do that. Canadian Press has been cut back considerably, and as a result we see a concentration of power.

Conrad Black said that he wasn't going to interfere in the papers, that he simply wants to run the business end of things. Of course, the editorials, we still have those people; we still have our writers and so on. We'll have that kind of freedom. In the university milieu, the educa-

tional milieu, they will say that's academic freedom. In this case, it would be freedom to express their views.

But now we have a circumstance where I read the following quote from Mr Black. He says, "We're going to try and recruit the very best people we can and produce the best papers we can, and publish them to the highest standards we can." Nobody would disagree with that. Everybody would like to see that happen. I'm sure people working at the newspaper say, "That's great, because that will help ensure our success."

However — the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale is waiting for the "however" and the continuation of this quote — he goes on to say, "And that means separating news from comment, assuring a reasonable variety of comment, and not just the overwhelming avalanche of soft, left, bland, envious pap which has poured like sludge through the centre pages of most of the Southam papers for some time."

If that isn't direct interference by one of the richest men in Canada, who now owns more than half the daily newspapers in this country, I don't know what is, and the other people they have who now order people.

I notice that Joan Fraser, who was the editor of the Montreal Gazette, had to leave the job, was invited to leave or certainly wasn't welcome to stay there, because Conrad Black wasn't satisfied with her views.

I see recently that Jim Travers, who has had a long history in terms of his involvement with newspapers, at the Ottawa Citizen was fired out the door or at least he found himself compelled to resign as a result of the kind of interference that was forthcoming. Today the editorial page editor, I believe, was given his pink slip. That concerns me greatly. Peter Calamai, who was the Ottawa Citizen's editorial page editor, I believe, was heading down the pathway.

This is not healthy. I know some of the members on the government side — not all — are in full agreement with Conrad Black's views on how this country should be run.

1640

I must say, my own newspaper now — everyone will be surprised that the St Catharines Standard now carries Barbara Amiel's column, now that it's a Southam paper. That is certainly going to add immeasurably to the capacity of that newspaper to broaden the point of view that it brings forward. Of course, Andrew Coyne, who could never be considered to be a raving left-winger, has been added as a columnist, as well as Giles Gherson. So what we're seeing is a movement to the right because the owner is moving them all to the right. There is direct interference and it's not healthy.

In Toronto we have three newspapers. We have the Toronto Sun, which has often reflected the viewpoint of the Conservative Party and people know that and I'm sure the government members are quite happy. The Toronto Star has on a number of occasions reflected the viewpoint of the Liberal Party, from time to time. But here we have —

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Not always, but from time to time. But here we have a situation where one individual, Conrad Black, is now taking over most of the papers in Canada

and is imposing his views through his editorial writers and others on those newspapers.

It says in this article by Doug Saunders in the Globe and Mail, October 2, about Mr Black: "Even as he insisted repeatedly that he would take a hands-off approach to the editorial content of the newspapers, Black excoriated the views and opinions that he feels have come to dominate their pages."

"He has no interest in banishing such views outright from his papers' pages, he says; rather, 'I do object to them being put in the role of hijacking an entire chain of newspapers and virtually asphyxiating any other source of comment or the other perspective.'"

I would say that we're going to see some considerable interference by Conrad Black in those newspapers and I am extremely concerned about that.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): Why don't you buy it?

Mr Bradley: The member over there says, "Why don't you buy it?" Of course, I don't have the financial resources that Mr Black has.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Bradley: But I know there are many others who — and I don't object, by the way, to Mr Black owning some newspapers. I just think it's unhealthy that he owns the overwhelming majority of daily newspapers in this country because I don't think that is very well done.

I should include in this what happened, because I know a lot of my friends on the other side of the House say, "Well, you know, you should let the market forces dictate this." This is what you look forward to. Let me tell you how it happened. John Miller of the Toronto Star is writing and he says, "When the dust cleared, one man" — this is when Conrad Black took over his many newspapers.

"The month of May has turned the Canadian newspaper industry upside down. Owners have dealt 100-year-old papers like playing cards. Publishers and editors have been fired. And cost cutting is threatening the existence of one of our most important national news institutions — the Canadian Press."

"When the dust cleared, one man, Conrad Black, controlled more daily newspapers than any person in this country's history. And it happened almost before we knew it, because newspaper ownership in Canada has become so concentrated — some would say saturated — that all of the 34 properties he bought changed hands privately in boardrooms without the bother of competitive bidding and with no possibility the new owners will be people who actually live in the communities being served."

So that's how that happened. It didn't happen in open bidding. It happened behind closed doors. You people usually talk about that. And here we are, an individual taking over and now dominating the newspaper business in this country. There are a lot of people who don't think that's healthy. I don't think it is. The member for Brampton South, whose views are right of — who could I say? — Genghis Khan on some occasions, at least in my opinion —

Mr Baird: Me, me. Right of me, Jim.

Mr Bradley: Right even of the member for Nepean, whose views are right wing.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I think he's right of Preston Manning.

Mr Bradley: Preston Manning would be a moderate in that caucus these days when I hear him speak.

He may like what has happened in this regard. I do not like what has happened and I think it's unhealthy for this country.

You ask, how does this possibly associate itself with this bill? You were wondering how I could tie it together with this bill. I haven't touched the tax cut. I promised I wouldn't get too far into the tax cut. It has touched the bill because I'm telling you that this is the kind of person who will support this legislation and who will be calling for more legislation of this kind in the future.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill. We will be voting against the bill, because we have found provisions in it that aren't in keeping with what we believe to be in the best interests of this province. I don't think this government has been balanced in its viewpoint in terms of labour-management negotiations. This bill will go over big in the Albany Club. I can assure you that they will be toasting it with the special Albany Club product that has been provided, I'm told, to people who frequent the Albany Club.

I want to thank the member across for that gift of Albany Club wine that has been provided. On a special occasion, it will certainly be cracked open, I hope in some case when this government brings forward legislation which is more progressive than others. It is a Canadian wine, I'm assured of that, because I don't imagine that we could have anything else other than a Canadian wine.

Anyway, I do welcome the opportunity to be able to speak ever so briefly on this bill. It is the third reading. I hope that the government backbenchers will ambush the Minister of Labour and the person who really runs the province, the Premier, and suggest that this bill be withdrawn and that the more offensive aspects of it be taken out. I will not be holding my breath until that happens; however, where there is life there is hope, and hope is eternal.

Mrs Caplan: I am pleased to rise and participate in the third reading debate of this bill, the Employment Standards Improvement Act. I have to tell you that my first criticism of this bill and many of the others that have been brought forward by the government is of the titles that it chooses. I think the titles of bills should actually reflect the content of bills. I also think that they are designed for the political spin or the hit, if you will, of the young whiz kids often referred to by my colleague the member for St Catharines, who spoke very eloquently on this bill. I share some of the concerns he has.

I'm not sure that this bill in any way improves employment standards; in fact, the bill does quite the opposite. Under the guise of administrative and procedural changes, rather than doing what this government says, which is to give promptness and effectiveness and more flexibility, this bill reduces the ability of the province to establish and maintain minimum labour standards.

The test of any government, of any government legislation, and the test that people ultimately will hold you accountable to, is, do you remain true to your principles and are you doing what is the right thing for the province from the perspective of creating an environment where jobs will flourish, where business and investment will come? If you were looking very simplistically, you might say, "This is going to be good for business, because by lowering and reducing the ability to maintain minimum standards, that's going to be good for business."

1650

But I say to the members opposite and to the government and to the people who are watching this debate that what creates a good climate for investment and job creation — and that is a priority for me and for our caucus and should be the priority for this government — is a climate of labour stability, of good labour-management relations. I don't think this bill promotes that. Certainly, when people look at this legislation, their reaction is going to be, "How does this bill affect me?" My constituents in Oriole, when they call me and hear me speak to an issue, one of the questions they ask me is: "How does this bill affect me? Does it have any impact on me?" My answer to people about Bill 49, which is before us today, is that if you work and have a job, or if you ever want a job, this bill will have an impact on you.

If you are a member of a union, the truth is that your union will fight to protect you via collective bargaining. That's their function and their role. But we know that the overwhelming majority of people who work in this province are not members of unions. They will not have the protections they had prior to the passage of this bill, because this bill ultimately will have a greater effect on unorganized labour than it will on organized labour, simply because they don't have that collective will to sit down and negotiate.

This government has said, when it argues that this is a good bill, that this will give greater simplicity and promptness and effectiveness in the enforcement of labour standards acts and that it will produce more flexibility in the resolution of complaints and greater self-reliance of the workplace parties. If the workplace parties are business and organized labour, labour and management in a large employer, I would argue this might not have a huge impact. Where it will have a huge impact on individual employees is in the unorganized workplace, and even in the organized workplace my concern is that we will over time, because of the theory that unless you've got somebody setting a basic minimum standard and adhering to that, see a dilution of the kind of employment standards that Ontario has been famous for. It's a good place to work. We have good employment standards.

We've seen this government turn back the clock on labour legislation. Frankly and honestly, I stood in this House and objected to the labour legislation that was brought forward by the NDP government because I felt that it tilted too far in favour of labour. I would argue, and I have stood in this House and argued, that the labour legislation that the Conservative government brought in did not improve the climate for investment and opportunity because it tilted too far in favour of manage-

ment and business. What creates the best environment for workers, for people who want to create jobs and see jobs created, is to have balance in your labour legislation so that business and labour can come to the table as equals to solve those problems.

As a member of a Liberal government, I was very proud of the fact that Ontario was seen as a community and a province where we had labour stability, where everyone recognized that no one had an edge, that you didn't have a government that favoured one side or the other. The view was that when the NDP government came in it gave away the shop to organized labour, and the Conservative government has given away the shop to big business. I guess that's because you have those two different ideologies and those two extremes.

I don't think this legislation does anything to improve employment standards. It doesn't do anything to help the average worker in the province. I don't think it is supportable and I wonder why it is even before us when the ministry has announced that it's doing a comprehensive overhaul of the Employment Standards Act that is expected to be completed in early 1997 with new legislation introduced.

The answer to that question of why this is before us is a simple one, and that is because this bill is about cuts. The bill that is brought forward is expected to achieve savings in the neighbourhood of 26.6% in the employment practices operations expenditure line in the provincial budget. Is that a good thing? My own view is that there may be opportunities for legitimate savings but I worry when you get cuts of this magnitude happening that quickly and legislation that is driven by a fiscal agenda of cuts to pay for the big tax cut of this government.

What they seem to be doing is cutting and hacking and slashing and thinking about the implications afterwards. I think that's the case with this legislation. I think taken together with all of the other things that this government is doing, and taken with the fiscal agenda of this government, it closes the door on what is really needed. What is really needed is an open public review of the Employment Standards Act.

We in the Liberal caucus would welcome that. We think that is appropriate, it is reasonable, that you need real consultation on matters that are going to affect individuals in the workplace. Because the goal of our society is to create jobs, to give people the opportunity to have the dignity of work. Let me tell you that employment standards are all about dignity in the workplace, because without employment standards you get exploitation. I don't think there is anybody in this province who wants to see us revert to the employment standards of the Third World. And I'm not suggesting this bill would do that, but what I am saying is that this bill does nothing to maintain the present employment standards environment which we have in place which is fair and balanced and reasonable and requires enforcement, because when you see cuts of this magnitude, you'd better believe that what they're cutting is the enforcement mechanisms that are in place to ensure that employment standards are maintained in unorganized workplaces.

That's what this is about. I have real concerns about that, because I think that creates an environment where business takes a second look, where jobs may not be created that would otherwise be created, and where employees are then open to exploitation by unscrupulous and bad employers. Are all employers unscrupulous and bad? No, of course not. In fact, we have always prided ourselves on the fact that we have good employment practices generally in Ontario. Why? Did it just happen? We hear horror stories of the sweatshops that are being uncovered in jurisdictions of the United States. Why do they flourish? Because there is nobody out there enforcing employment standards to a limit, I guess is the word, that we would have always expected and contemplated in Ontario. We haven't heard those horror stories and I hope we never do. But I fear that as we go down that American road and bring our standards in line with our neighbours to the south, which means not raising them, it means lowering them, we in fact place our workers in jeopardy and we open Ontario, not to good business and new jobs and a flourishing economic environment. I worry that we open Ontario to those folks who would come here and realize that they have a new ability to exploit our workers.

I worry about that, because part of our quality of life here in Ontario is because of the foundation that has been built over the years of the balance in labour relations and labour-management practices and employment standards, occupational health and safety — all of those things where governments in the past have realized that we in fact have a role.

1700

My worry, and the last word I'm going to say on this, is one of the reasons that I so fundamentally disagree with the Harris government, with this ultra-conservative government, that their view of what government's role is fundamentally differs from mine. If I were to explain it simplistically, I would say that my friends in the NDP, and I don't think they would disagree with this analogy, believe that government has a role in just about every aspect of life in Ontario. I don't believe that, but I do believe that government has a role in facilitating and ensuring that our quality of life is maintained and enhanced. And I'm not prepared to say government has a role in everything, but what you hear from the Conservatives is they truly believe that government has a limited role, and if they could eliminate government's role they would.

So we are seeing the government being warned by the Provincial Auditor and by the Environmental Commissioner that they're going too far when it comes to the environment. And they are. We had a Minister of Environment fired, and I think she was fired because she told the truth. She believed that this government's out-of-your-face attitude is something people should say out loud and talk about, and because she did that, she was fired. Instead of the platitudes and the rhetoric of, "Don't worry, everything will be fine and everything will be well," former minister Brenda Elliott, I think, told the truth about this government's agenda, which is to get government out of everything that they can possibly get out of.

My worry about changes to the Employment Standards Act is that while there may be some parts of this act that are worthy or meritorious, it is a reflection of a government that wants out. And we'll be watching very carefully to see what is the next thing that they bring forward.

I will not be supporting this bill because this, along with the other things that this government is doing, takes us down a very slippery road of diminishing the important protections that workers and business need in order to have a stable climate for investment and job creation.

I am not questioning this government's motives; I am questioning their competence and I am also questioning their approach to doing business. A piecemeal approach to changes in employment standards is unacceptable to me as the member for a working-class riding, people who work and who need the protection of good employment standards in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): In the time that I have been allotted I want to add my voice and my contribution to this particular bill, Bill 49, as it concerns a very important sector in our industry, and that is the workers of Ontario.

The intent of the law is quite clear. It is not to offer more protection to the workplace, the work environment or the workers in Ontario; it is to bring the already very low standards to the bare minimum and give whatever power is left that would create a fair balance, totally tilting it to the side of the employer.

I think we have a major problem when unionized workers find it so difficult to maintain some of their rights, some of their protections that they now enjoy within the workplace. I think it's another story when it comes to the unorganized workers. I wonder who's going to speak for them. That's, I think, where the government should really look into the situation here. If organized workers find it very difficult to protect their rights, their working conditions, their future, their jobs, I wonder what's going to happen to the unorganized labour.

I don't want to sensitize the issue and I don't want to raise the ire of my colleagues on the other side, but when we see headlines like this saying, "Province Braces for Chaos," I think if it does — I don't think it will; I think the Chair of Management Board is quite wrong when he says that the day of the 25th is going to be chaos and confrontation.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Liberal leadership.

Mr Sergio: Well, it's not leadership, or it's not the Liberal leadership; I think it's you people who are causing the situation that we see in the workplace over there. If there is a crisis, if there is a confrontation, it's because of your actions, it's what you're doing. Yes, sir. Because my community, it's highly a very hardworking working-class people and they resent how you are introducing, how you are approving the laws, continuing to erode whatever protection they have left in the workplace.

We have seen this, not with this particular piece of legislation, but just for the information of my colleagues on the other side, because I think they have a very short

memory, we have already seen it with the devastation of Bill 7, the so-called Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act; with Bill 8, the Job Quotas Repeal Act; with Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act. We have seen it already so no wonder the workers out there are in a total panic; no wonder the Chairman of Management Board says we're going to see panic and chaos.

The workers out there are in a panic because they continually have a government that continues to pick on whatever is left of their protection, continues to pick on the workers. It doesn't pick on the big people. It doesn't pick on the big corporations. It picks on the small people, on those who are defenceless, on those who are not capable of defending themselves. Unfortunately, the government is supposed to be defending those particular people, and the government is not.

I have read some of the presentations the bill received while travelling in Ontario in the very brief time the government allowed for some input from the various individuals and organized groups. Let me say what is the concern with most of the workers out there, with our working force, with our people: If there is one thing they are mostly concerned about it is the working conditions they are afraid will be imposed upon them by employers.

I think my colleague from Oriole said it before: Not all employers are bad. We have a lot of good people, a lot of good employers up there. But what protection does an employee have when he or she is forced to work on evenings or on weekends for the same pay? It's either you do it or you're out. This piece of legislation gives the power, the authority to the employer to do exactly that.

On the surface, it may not say very much. On the surface, it may not mean very much. But I wonder what it does to the morale of those workers, those individuals, those single parents, mothers or fathers. There are no more after-hours programs. There aren't any because of cuts. The fear that we are instilling in those workers says: "Hey, look, if we say you have to work until 8 o'clock tonight or work on the weekends, it's up to you, but if you don't, you're gone, and you do it under the same conditions and at the same pay."

What happens to a single mother or a single father? The kids are waiting and there is nobody to look after them. Where are they going to go? Ah yes, the government is thinking of putting in slot machines so they can kill their time. Isn't that a nice idea? That's where we are going to send our kids after hours when employers force employees to work overtime, extra hours and on weekends, under the same conditions.

I have met quite a few employees who are working in terrible conditions in factories, doing very heavy work, dirty work, work that is not suited for a woman, but they are enduring it because there is nothing else out there. They are working more hours, enduring whatever the conditions are within the workplace because there is nothing else out there.

That's what it's all about. But more than that, the bill is supposed to offer better conditions, more protection. I think the intent of this particular bill is quite clear. The intent of this particular bill is to chop down another

26.6% or something like \$12 million or \$14 million from the employment practice operation expenditure. It doesn't care about providing more protection for the workers of Ontario.

1710

This piece of legislation as it now exists — unfortunately, we are at third reading and I think we are at the end of the road with it. The government side seems to intend to ram it through, as they did with many other bills. It's set, because they don't see the negative impact this is going to have on the workers of Ontario. I would have hoped, because they keep on saying, "We want to listen to the people and do what the people say," that by now, at third reading, they would have said, "We'd like to change some things and make it really better, make it really good for the people." But what the bill is proposing is, I'm afraid, what is going to be approved.

It is the rights, it is the benefits that are being curtailed, and it's something the government eventually is going to be held responsible for.

They have cut the employment standards officers from some 150 to about 100. They have cut the time an employee now has to make a claim and stuff like that. The benefits have been cut. I'm asking the government, what are the benefits of this particular bill? How is this going to improve the working conditions of our employees?

My time is coming to a close. I'd like to leave my presentation on third reading, and the members on the other side of the House, with this particular touch, and hopefully on Monday when we decide to vote on this matter they may have some second thoughts and hopefully bring some changes — I'm always hopeful — but I want to leave them with this: The scale is tilting totally in favour of the employer and not the employees. Unfortunately, the employees will pay for the contents of this bill. There is no balance and there is no fairness. As such, I have to say, as my colleague said before, we can't support it. I hope the government side, when it comes on Monday for final approval, will have second thoughts and will have in mind the workers of Ontario.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am pleased to stand today to speak to this bill. I had the opportunity to travel while this bill was being heard, and in particular I was interested in the kinds of representations that were made in the city of Windsor. The PA to the minister will well remember that day. We had an enormous number of people who came, who listened, who presented. We had a couple of people who were supportive of the bill — government plants, we like to call them. It's difficult to find some of them in our town, though, you must admit. Nevertheless, we did have some, and we were certainly anxious to hear all sides when the bill on employment standards was being discussed. As our colleague from Ottawa says, always enthusiastically, "In Windsor, everything they do is ever with enthusiasm."

I really was interested to see what they were going to say, because clearly we all heard from the outset — in fact we spoke in this House on this bill during second reading and I was talking about what the real priorities of the government should be.

When we talked about employment standards, I wanted to talk about the portables in LaSalle and the employment standards that are expected of more and more teachers across the province teaching in portables like never before. The number of portables in schools is on the rise. I brought pictures into the House and I showed pictures of the schools in LaSalle, the portables, holes in the floor. They couldn't believe we had portables of this nature, and we certainly do. Why did we have that? Because the Minister of Education imposed a capital moratorium on spending which was forcing boards to double-spend their money. Instead of going forward with already authorized expenditures for schools where we desperately needed them in high-growth areas, what they did instead was say, "No, you can't build that," which forced school boards to spend, in this case, in my county, an additional \$200,000 for additional portables, because it was in areas of high growth, and is today. What will eventually happen is a school will have to be built, so what will our board have to do? They'll have to spend that money again. I see that as completely wasteful and it just points to the kind of priorities set by government that really don't make any sense, let alone any common sense. So we did talk about that, then. Teachers shouldn't have to teach in portables, period, but they're ever on the rise because of this government's policies.

Then we talked about other areas that really should be the priority of government, and health care clearly is one of those things. Members on the other side of the House have heard oftentimes about the issues with doctors in my community, that we have pregnant women who are in urgent need of care, and that we have women at risk who are pregnant who simply are not getting prenatal care. The minister comes running out to the press like a young boy bursting out of the doors just before the bell rings all excited, to announce a clinic, because we're going to have a clinic as a solution for pregnant women in Windsor. The reality is it had yet to be drawn up, we still didn't have details and yes, he let the cat out of the bag too early and in fact only showed a display to the negotiators at the table with the Ministry of Health and the OMA that indeed the minister was not bargaining in good faith, he has no intentions of moving forward in good faith in negotiation with doctors to settle it once and for all and is only looking for more Band-Aid solutions to very critical issues that must be addressed today. So instead, we're sitting here in the middle of October discussing third reading of the Employment Standards Act.

Should the act be updated? Absolutely. The act is old and it needs to be revised. In fact, most acts ought to be a dynamic thing, where they're constantly reviewed and updated, and that certainly is the same with this bill. It does do that in some instances, but the government went far beyond that in the changes it made and certainly showed its true colours when it looks at the effects it will have on workers and in particular, as has been mentioned by my Liberal colleagues and our friends next door, the standards of change that will impact negatively on non-unionized workers, of which there are many. Even in a community like mine, which is perceived as a heavily unionized town, only 38% of our workforce in fact is

unionized. That leaves a great number of people in my area without a union.

In many union contracts, standards are certainly written into them, which brings me to my next point. So clearly does this eliminate and lower standards in the workplace that just recently, with the contract that was settled between Chrysler Canada and the CAW, both sides were very — in fact did a terrific job at negotiating the very standards that are being removed by this government. They wrote them into the contract and Chrysler Canada agreed and showed great leadership. Chrysler Canada is doing very well; they're a very profitable firm and they have very good management, very sound management.

Why would Chrysler Canada agree in negotiation with the CAW to write in employment standards that are being removed by this government? Clearly, they know that's because it makes good business sense. Certainly, our hats go off to the negotiators on the CAW side, who recognize that they need to protect their workers, that they want to be sure that what this Harris government intends to do to workers of Ontario is simply not on with the CAW. Our hats go off to Buzz Hargrove for his hard work during that, and our hats go off to the team of negotiators on behalf of Chrysler Canada, who keep thousands of people working in my community and in many communities across Ontario. I think that's a very clear indicator that the business community and the labour community recognize that what this current government is doing to employment standards is, simply put, bad for business. We're happy to see that kind of negotiation happen in a very successful way.

1720

Let me tell you one particular aspect of the bill that does have some great concerns for me; that is the privatization of collections for employees who are owed wages by companies. I think it's pretty serious. Of course, it goes in line with the rest of the government mantra about privatizing and everything is better when it's done privately, but sometimes that just simply is not the case. In this case, collecting workers' wages by a private agency I just don't think is appropriate. For one, the employee, as it's written in this current bill, has to consent to do so. Well, when you are a worker and you're owed wages, I would say you're under considerably more duress than the employer might be to have to consent, to what? To accepting less in wages simply to get something at all, because they realize that they certainly aren't going to be in a position to wait out the period to collect the fees, so the worker will be under considerable duress to sign and agree to get any percentage of wages at all. For us as a government in Ontario to agree and indeed pass a bill like this that includes the privatization of collections which allows only 75% of wages owing to eventually be paid to a worker, again, is simply not on. I can't see that any members would agree with that.

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: Our member from Ottawa is telling me to hurry along. When I'm making a significant valued point on behalf of employees, I think it's imperative that we get specifically to the point. In fact, let's look at what

that area is: "A collector may agree to a compromise or settlement with the person who owes the money...if the person to whom the money is owed agrees in writing to the compromise." How could a worker not compromise when he's faced with no money at all or just a portion of the money? Now, what do you think he's going to do? Of course he's going to have to agree to take less than he's owed.

Let's move on: "The collector shall not agree to a compromise or settlement of an amount owed under the act if" he'd receive less than 75%. What happens to the other 25%? Did the worker not genuinely work for the other 25% and is he not really entitled to that money?

I put that very question to the chamber of commerce in my community, who was represented there on the day we did the hearings. Our friend Mr Baird will remember this well. I put the situation on the other foot for this representative and I said, "Now, if one of your member agencies subcontracts work to another firm who then does work" — let's take the construction industry — "and subcontracts to a painting company who comes in and does a contract of painting for a firm, after the work is done is there any situation that seems reasonable at all that the subtracted firm could ever be paid only 75% of what work it already did?" "Absolutely not." If the principle holds true that for firms who are subcontracted to other firms under any circumstances it wouldn't be allowable or reasonable that a subcontracted firm would be allowed only 75% of the work that's already been done, how can this government put forward a bill that actually entitles an employer to pay only 75% of the wages owed to an employee?

I mean, the principle must hold true, and I would really ask members of the House to consider what really is fair. Every time I look at what bills come forward from this government I really do look at what is fair, and what's fair for everyone involved. It's just not fair that workers should work and be in a position not to be able to argue — may have to sign on the dotted line to receive some of the moneys owed, because they are the ones who are going to be under stress and under financial constraint and the company walks away only paying 75% of what it truly owes their employee.

That's only one example of the area of the bill that came up, certainly during the hearings in my community, but one with which the chamber representative could not answer the question, because they in fact represent companies who have been in that very position. Companies often are not paid for all the work they've been quoted to do and have billed appropriately, and they recognize it's not fair. Likewise, it certainly isn't for the employees either.

During the hearings we also talked about the significant cuts of staffing within the Ministry of Labour and the representatives from government agreed as well that there were significant cuts happening. I would like to know too how the government expects to enforce near the level that it used to enforce when they are cutting the number of inspectors within the ministry. It's very similar and again it's very parallel to what's happening with the Attorney General's office in the family support program. The Attorney General stands up and with glee and with

great fanfare he announces hard measures to get those deadbeat dads to pay, and at the same time he shuts down all the regional offices across Ontario, the very people who have the connections to those who pay and those who need to be paid. So on the one hand the government gets all of the kudos for having teeth to go after them, remove their driver's licence etc — all very well and good; also hardly effective if you don't have the level of staff required to go after the people. All I can tell you is that the same is true in this case, that even if you are trying to establish and enforce guidelines currently and lower, as this bill would certainly make them, we are also under attack in terms of level of service and will have that many fewer inspectors through the ministry who will actually do the work.

If we look at the Provincial Auditor's report that was released earlier this week, they look at the Ministry of Labour. Why didn't the government members look to see what kind of priorities the Provincial Auditor sets out for the Ministry of Labour? In fact they talk about their "Overall Audit Observations" in the area of workplace health and safety:

"To ensure that the health and safety of workers are better protected, the ministry needs to set priorities and monitor the time spent on developing and amending regulations" — I think they're talking about prioritization there — "establish a system of risk assessment to identify and target high-risk workplaces for inspection and develop a system for rating the seriousness of violations of the act and regulations and for ensuring that significant problems identified by inspectors are promptly followed up."

How will you ever, come next year and the auditor's report of next year, say you've done better when you have fewer people working there and fewer inspectors to follow up on the kind of violations that do exist, because there are bad employers out there? How are you going to mete this out? The simple answer is, that is not a priority with this government and it certainly should be.

Once again, it's simply a case of a government focusing on that small group of Ontario that is in sync with their very reformist-type thinking, and that is just not the majority in Ontario. Most people in Ontario work for other people, and the government, who must govern for all Ontarians, have an equal responsibility to workers as they do to their employers. This bill is certainly not an example of that, and I join my colleagues in the Liberal Party in voting vehemently against this bill.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I have the weekly business statement.

Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of October 21, 1996.

On Monday, October 21, the House will complete second reading of Bill 81.

The business of the House on Tuesday, October 22, is to be determined.

Wednesday, October 23, will be an opposition day standing in the name of the leader of the NDP.

On Thursday, October 24, we will move a motion for interim supply.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI (continued)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act. The Employment Standards Act sets out minimum conditions that employers are compelled to provide and that workers have every right to expect.

I think it's worth pointing out that most employers in the province of Ontario not only meet the minimum standards but exceed them. We do set minimums because we as a society decided there should be a certain baseline which no fellow citizen should fall below. We don't want people, too often among the most vulnerable in our society, to be placed in a position where they have to make a decision on whether to accept a job at \$2 an hour or to decide as a condition of employment whether they should be working 80 hours a week.

At the outset of this debate, I think it's imperative to be clear on one issue. Not one employment standard is affected by this bill. The minimum wage is untouched, the hours of work are untouched, overtime pay is untouched, public holidays are untouched, vacation provisions are untouched; in fact we have even improved and strengthened the pregnancy and parental leave provisions of the act. Again, not a single standard is changed by this bill. Not one.

Our goal and motivation in proposing this legislation is simple and straightforward. We want to institute legislative changes that will see more workers realize more of their rights under law. The act is not a set of proposed guidelines. All the rights and benefits for vulnerable workers contained in the Employment Standards Act are meaningless if at the end of the day they only serve as a set of high principles.

Workers in Ontario expect more than a lofty set of ideals, and I believe the measures contained in this piece of legislation will allow more workers in Ontario to do more than simply read about their rights; they will allow more workers to actually realize those rights.

1730

As I said earlier, it is important to note that the vast majority of employers follow the Employment Standards Act. However, there are those who would take advantage of their employees, and we can't protect them without the proper tools.

Let's take a look at Bill 49. Bill 49 is primarily about improving the administration and enforcement of the Employment Standards Act. It will also help us focus our resources where they are most needed: to those most vulnerable workers.

One of the key elements of Bill 49 is our proposal to replace the current two-year limitation period for filing a claim with a six-month limitation. This new period is in line with other provinces, such as Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. These five provinces, governed by Liberal governments, Progressive Conservative governments and even NDP

governments, all ask workers to come forward with a complaint within six months or 180 days. Almost 90% of the claims we receive in the province of Ontario are already filed within six months. We're asking people to come forward within six months because it is often difficult to investigate claims that are brought to our attention years after they occurred.

Those employers who violate the Employment Standards Act are often running a shoestring, fly-by-night operation and could very well be out of business in a few years' time, let alone much less than that. By then, the money is long gone and the workers are out of luck. What we're saying to workers is, "Come forward sooner and we can be of more help."

Bill 49 will also place a \$10,000 ceiling on the value of orders that can be issued by employment standards officers on behalf of an individual claimant. Employees who wish to make a claim for more than \$10,000 will now be required to use the courts.

I would remind all members that until 1991 there was a \$4,000 cap on claims, excluding severance pay. The percentage of individual claims that exceed \$10,000 is about 4%. Often, but not in all cases, they involve individuals in management positions.

Unfortunately, removal of the limit on claims in 1991 encouraged employees with large claims to file a complaint with the ministry and pursue separate civil action. This is an unnecessary duplication of effort and a waste of taxpayer money.

Moreover, the 4% of individual cases above the \$10,000 limit often take up a disproportionate amount of the ministry's resources because they're generally more complex. We believe our resources must be most focused on helping those most vulnerable workers.

Another key feature of this bill is that employees will have to decide at the outset whether they wish to file an employment standards claim or take the matter to court, because taxpayers have given this government a simple message: Stop the duplication. It seems absolutely crazy to have employment standards officers working on one side of University Avenue on an employment standards claim and then to have both parties right across the street in court on the same issue.

We're leaving a two-week grace period for applicants, after they submit a claim, to obtain legal advice on whether they would like to pursue their options through the courts. This provision is consistent with other provinces, where employees must choose one route or the other.

This legislation enables us to set a minimum claim amount, something that, I would like to point out, we have no plans of instituting at this time. But one presenter pointed out during the public hearings on this bill that it would be somewhat ironic to spend \$500 working on a claim for \$25.

Other key changes will help employment standards officers work with both employers and employees to resolve complaints before they resort to a time-consuming full-scale investigation. Right now, if an employment standards officer could come to an agreement quickly that both parties would accept, they're not allowed to do it

under the legislation. We've got to encourage such processes so workers can get more money sooner.

Bill 49 is also going to lengthen the period in which claimants or employers can appeal decisions on employment standards orders. Right now they have to appeal within 15 days. What we find is that too often we're seeing too many precautionary appeals that waste government resources. The taxpayers don't want that waste.

Bill 49 also clarifies employer rights under the pregnancy and parental leave provisions. The intent of these provisions was to ensure that any entitlement based upon length of service, such as vacation, termination and severance, would continue to accrue during pregnancy and parental leave. However, there were some misinterpretations of this provision by some in the province and we felt it was very important to clarify it. This provision, I should report to the House, received almost unanimous approval around the province of Ontario.

This bill will also require the parties to a collective agreement to be expected to manage the resolution of disputes themselves. Most employment standards complaints in unionized environments are almost always dealt with in-house today.

One presenter from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters told our committee that the ESA does not in any substantial way affect his union because his collective agreement covers virtually everything at a far greater level.

Another presenter in Thunder Bay, from CUPE Local 87, said that his union knows the workplace best, because they're there every day, and reported to the standing committee on resources development that his local was able to collect on 100% of all orders. Impressive indeed.

Mark Klyn, a former steelworker in Algoma, told the committee in Sault Ste Marie, "Large unions are capable of taking care of their own members."

This change will allow the ministry staff to focus their resources on those most in need.

However, the most exciting part of this bill, in my judgement, is the proposal to bring in private collection agencies to recover money owed to workers. Regrettably, we're not doing as good a job as we can do. Right now in the province of Ontario we're only collecting 25 cents on the dollar for workers. That is to say that once a worker is apprised of their rights, after they file a complaint, after that complaint is investigated, after an order is issued, after the appeal period has expired, workers are only receiving 25 cents on the dollar. That's \$16 million that the ministry is collecting on orders of some \$64 million. We've got to do better than that, and we can.

The previous government attempted to deal with this issue, with no success. In 1993 the previous government disbanded the collections branch within the Ministry of Labour and discharged 10 employees. Employment standards officers were then asked to assume this extra responsibility. In my judgement, an employment standards officer should not be doing anything else but enforcing employment standards, not chasing down dollars from deadbeats.

In all fairness to my colleagues opposite, though, in taking this action I believe the previous government did prove one very important point: The amount of money

that you throw at a problem doesn't necessarily guarantee better results. Back in 1993 the collections branch within the ministry was collecting 25 cents on the dollar. Today, three years later, after the collections branch was disbanded, after the previous government cut 351 jobs within the ministry, which is more than \$62 million, more than a third of the Ministry of Labour's budget, after all that we're still only collecting 25 cents on the dollar. If throwing money at this problem was the way of getting better results, we would be collecting 150%.

We can and we must do better. I'm confident that the use of professionally trained private sector collection agencies will improve results considerably. As one presenter from OPSEU told the committee, what is lacking right now is a pecuniary interest, a personal interest at the ministry. I am confident that we'll be able to do better for workers in this province.

The bottom line is that workers will get more money in their hands and they will get that money quicker. They will also get it at significantly less cost to the taxpayer, because the important thing to note is that the deadbeat employers are the ones who have to pay the fee for the collection agency. The ironic thing now is that those employers who accept their obligations under the Employment Standards Act and those workers who pay their income tax and who are owed money from a deadbeat employer are the ones who have to pay, and that is an absolutely abysmal circumstance.

In the public hearings we heard that if more orders were actually enforced more people would be likely to pay. We heard that when we travelled to my home community in Ottawa-Carleton where Willy Bagnell, the president of Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade, told the committee that we'd likely get better compliance if it was taken seriously and believed to be taken seriously.

Let me clearly acknowledge that the current Employment Standards Act, even with the beneficial changes contained in Bill 49, does need a comprehensive overhaul. That's why we're very pleased to see that the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, the Minister of Labour, has recognized this fact and has acknowledged that a full-scale review of the act will be undertaken this fall. I'm pleased to report that she has already invited consultations with both labour and business representatives on the development of a draft discussion paper that will be released this fall.

I'm pleased to report to this Legislature that the ministry has made great progress by vigorously dealing with the backlog of cases. Last year we had a backlog of 4,000 cases; this year I'm pleased to report that we've got it down to 2,600.

1740

In undertaking further reforms of the ESA, it's imperative to remember two things. We must be clear. We heard one presenter from the Niagara region come to the committee when we were in Hamilton and say: "Listen, I don't care what standards you want me to undertake. Just be clear and simple about it. Tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it." So new legislation must be straightforward.

Unfortunately the Employment Standards Act has stood still while the workforce has changed dramatically. The

second thing I believe we must keep in mind is how any new law will translate into results for people. A law written with the highest principles that doesn't translate into results for people, simply put, has little utility. Our challenge as a government is to translate those rights into results for workers across the province because it's just not there today for far too many.

Our legislation is enforceable. It gives us the tools to ensure that a small percentage of employers who refuse to accept their responsibilities under the act pay up for workers whose rights they have violated. It also allows us to focus our resources on those most vulnerable workers. I suspect that some members opposite might complain that we haven't legislated Utopia. They might complain that Bill 49 doesn't create a perfect world. You know, they'd be right, because Bill 49 is realistic. It's enforceable, it has teeth and it's backed up with provisions to allow us to get better results for workers.

I believe Bill 49 is realistic and, as such, represents the first step towards addressing concerns that by all accounts previous changes to the act have not accomplished. We need to address the dramatic changes undertaken in our labour market. We must ensure that our act is relevant to the changing workplace and meets the needs of employers and employees.

Bill 49 is an act that responds to the changing labour market, workplace and employee-employer relationship. Ultimately it's going to contribute to economic growth in our province, which will mean more jobs for our people. More workers will obtain more of their rights after this bill is passed.

We look forward to a comprehensive review of the Employment Standards Act to modernize it, to bring it into the next millennium so that we can do a better job for workers.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'm going to try to wrap this up so I can leave a few minutes for my colleague from the Conservative Party. I want to get on the record because I think this legislation is a good indication of where the government is going in regard to workers' rights. I can't pass up the opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of Cochrane South and those workers affected by this law.

The member for Nepean opened up his comments by saying that this bill gave workers more rights, that he didn't see this bill taking away rights from anybody. I would simply say this to the member, and the point was made eloquently by our House leader a little earlier: If that's the case, why is it that of every workers' organization that came and spoke on this bill, of those who came in and spoke to our critic at the hearings he did, none agreed with that? Not one workers' organization came forward and said, "We see this as giving us more rights"; they all came forward and said, "This takes rights away from workers." Conversely, on the other side, employers who came and presented on this bill, as employers in my riding did — representatives of the chamber of commerce and others — are deliriously happy with this bill. That should tell you something.

You have the employer community represented by the independent business federation of Ontario; you have the

chamber of commerce, those people speaking on the interests of employers who are standing up and saying: "This is great stuff. This levels the playing field. This gives us an opportunity to do the things we want to do in business," and take the labour relations stuff out of their face. On the other hand you've got workers' organizations and unions saying: "Not at all. You're taking rights away." I think that's fairly clear. You're tipping the scale to employers. That's what this legislation is doing. I would say to people in the Legislature and others watching at home that this is only the beginning.

This is a small step on the part of the Minister of Labour and this government to move forward on taking away workers' rights when it comes to Employment Standards. This is just the beginning. The major review announced by the minister when this legislation came forward said you were going to come forward with sweeping changes to the Employment Standards Act with which you're going to, among other things, take away minimum standards from the Employment Standards Act, everything from hours of work to how overtime is paid, and possibly take away minimum standards in regard to statutory holidays. All that is going to go out the door so that if you are an employer, especially in a non-unionized workplace, you have a fairly big stick to try to get your workers to submit to the regime you want to introduce when it comes to what's now termed under the Employment Standards Act.

The scenario can be, especially in a non-unionized workplace, that the employer would go to the four or five employees and say, "Listen, guys and gals, to keep my doors open I'm going to pay you X when it comes to overtime and I'm going to treat statutes this way," which would be a taking away from what they already have, and there's absolutely nothing employees would be able to do under this new regime that the Minister of Labour wants to bring in after Bill 49. When the member for Nepean says this doesn't take away workers' rights I have to say, give your head a shake and take a look at what this does. That was good. Just to paraphrase, the member for Nepean did give his head a shake.

Specifically, the things the government is doing not to take from workers' rights are spelled out in the bill. The limitation period: Under the current act, proceedings and prosecutions must be commenced within two years. That means that if you were to bring an employer to the employment standards board for a violation of your rights under the current Employment Standards Act, you would have two years to do so. What are we saying in the bill? "You're only going to have 45 days." I see that as a take-away.

I know in my constituency office, and the member for Dovercourt I'm sure can attest to this as well — how many people come into your office and say, "I was not aware that I had rights," when it came to a particular issue, when it comes to employment standards as they relate to your workplace? "My Lord, for a year now I've been working overtime and I haven't been paid for it," or "For a year now I've been working on statutory holidays and my employer has only paid me straight time," or whatever the issue might be, especially with new Canadians.

Even others who have been in this nation and were born and raised here don't know their rights many times. They find out from other workers, they find out from conversations with their friends, they find out from going to community clinics, and all of a sudden they say, "Listen, if I'm entitled, I want what I'm entitled to be paid under the law." They go to the employment standards office, they file a complaint with the officer and they have up to two years to do that. Often they do it late in year 1 or early in year 2. You say they'll have 45 days. The point is that the employer can abuse this. It's a take-away from employees. It's as clear as that.

The other thing is that it gives restrictions on the amount of money you can recover from your employer for his or her not having followed the Employment Standards Act. The bill provides that money cannot be recovered if it is owing to an employee for more than six months. Here's another scenario. A worker was working for a particular employer, and the employer said: "Listen, I'm going to split up your shifts. This week you're going to work 60 hours and next week you're going to work 30 hours so I don't have to give you any overtime, because I'm within the limits of the act." The worker says: "That sounds about right. Okay, I'll do it," and finds out a year later: "Hey, that's not the case. For the week I worked 60 hours I should have been paid my overtime, according to the Employment Standards Act, above the 48," if that particular section applied, "and I'm entitled to it."

Under what you're proposing in the act they're only going to be able to go back six months. In other words, the employer would have gotten the worker to work all that time, and the worker would not be paid for it. That's what you you're doing in this. Prior to this legislation becoming law, which it's going to become very shortly because we're in the last day of third reading debate, employees were able to go back and get whatever money was owed to them. I say listen, what's good for the good is good for the gander.

In the private sector, if a contractor does work for a company they have to pay the entire bill, and if some shenanigans have been around and either the supplier or the purchaser of the service finds out there's been something done wrong, they have access to the courts to get back their money; there's no statute of limitation that says you can only do so within six months. Why should the private sector be treated one way when it comes to money owed to them but the worker does not have the same entitlement?

I see that as a take-away and I say you will see this in your constituency offices. You will see people come in and say, "I was entitled to money, I didn't know I had these rights," and all of sudden they're not going to be able to do anything about it. They'll only go back for six months. Who benefits? In this case the employer; certainly not the worker. I see that as a take-away.

Another thing you're doing is around the method of enforcement. This is dangerous stuff. This is the part of the bill I really have difficulty with, among other things. You're doing a couple of things here. First of all you say an employee who files a complaint under this act is not entitled to bring a civil action in the same matter to the courts. You can argue that from the government side as

saying: "You don't want to tie up the courts. You're under one process of the law, so you shouldn't go under the other." But sometimes there are cases, and I've seen them in my constituency office, where the employee does not have a lot of other choice because of circumstance. You're blocking them out of that process. I would say in 99.9% of cases there was not a civil suit at the same time that they went to the Employment Standards Act, but in those cases where there was, I've often found there was good reason.

1750

The other thing you're doing, which I think is even more interesting, and, quite frankly, I have a real problem with this one, is you're saying an employee to whom a collective agreement applies is not entitled to file a complaint under the act. In other words, if I'm a member of a union and you work next door and you're working in a workplace that's not a union, the act applies to the non-unionized member but doesn't apply to the unionized member.

I don't see that as being fair. How does that work? What you can end up with over a period of time, and I don't think it will happen immediately the day after the act is proclaimed, but over a period of time the employer will say, "Listen, at the unionized workplace we're going through tough times and we want some kind of concessions from the employees." So they go to the bargaining table or they sign a letter of understanding prior to a collective agreement, in the life of the collective agreement, and they negotiate out particular provisions within the collective agreement that could in fact bring you under the bare minimum that we have in the Employment Standards Act. That's a very tempting thing, especially in shift operations when it comes to things like statutory holidays and overtime.

I've worked in workplaces that have been under a lot of stress by the employer because they're not making any money and I was on bargaining committees where employers came to us and asked for concessions. Being a member of a bargaining unit that wants to be responsible to their members, you try to negotiate the best deal that you can for your members, and that sometimes means a concession if it means everybody is going to keep their job. But what you're going to end up with is that an employer can really take advantage, especially in shift operations.

There'll be a temptation on the part, I think — I hope this will not be the case, but I know, for example, in 1992-93, as Abitibi-Price in Iroquois Falls was going through the downturn in the economy and paper sales were going down, there would have been an awful large want on the part of the company to go to the union and try to take away some of the stat holidays to save money, because not only would they not have to pay the stat holidays, they wouldn't have to pay the double time and a half during those stat holidays to keep the plant running. If they had had the ability to go to the union and to try to negotiate that out, never mind out of the collective agreement but basically take away workers' rights out of the Employment Standards Act in effect is what you'd be doing there, I think the company might have tried.

I don't think Ed Godfrey, the then president of the local, or I think Jim French was the president of Local 109 at the time, or Dave Sawchuk from the IPW, would have said, "Hey, we agree to this." I'm sure they would have fought for their members and they would have fought this back. But in some workplaces around the province I think it could happen.

You could end up having a situation over a period of time where workers working in a unionized environment, in order to try to work with their employers to make the plant efficient — not efficient, but less costly because, you know, there may not be a market for that particular product — could end up working for conditions that are less than what is in the Employment Standards Act. If that's not a takeback, if that's not less, I don't know. This is not a case of doing more for less. This a question of doing less for less, is what you're doing.

The other thing you're doing is the question around the power of debt collectors, and this is something that most people miss when they look at this legislation, the last point I want to make. It says in the act, "A collector may enter into a settlement agreement on behalf of the person owed money under this act with the person's consent."

Quite frankly, that means if Joe Blow is hired to go out to try to make an arrangement between the worker who is owed money by an employer for work done that he or she hasn't been paid for, he can try to work out a deal between the employer and the employee which might be less than what the employee is actually worth. In 90% of cases that I've seen around the Employment Standards Act, there has been a real reluctance on the part of employees to go after what's rightfully theirs because they don't want to be in a fight with their employers. All they want is to be paid for the work they've done. What ends up happening is they already feel pretty bad going through it.

I remember one particular case with a local employer, where the employer was way out in left field. The employee reluctantly came to me and to the employment standards board in order to get what was justly hers only because she had done a lot of soul-searching. Her husband and others said, "Listen, you're entitled to this, you need to go after what you're entitled to, if not for you, for other people who are working in your workplace." But if you give this kind of right to a debt collector, what could end up happening is that debt collector can put pressure on that particular individual to saw off for far less than what they're worth.

Now the member for Nepean says, "We're not taking rights away." I'd say that's right, the point being this woman was owed somewhere around \$12,000. She ended up getting it in the end because of the work I had done with her through the employment standards branch. Quite frankly, I don't think she would have got the \$12,000. I think if it had been left between the three parties, she probably would have walked out of there with \$3,000 or \$4,000, if not nothing, because she was very fearful of going after what was rightfully hers because, like most people, you don't like to rock the boat. Quite frankly, what you're doing is you're taking away.

There are only about six minutes left on third reading and I want to leave some time for the member from the

Conservative Party, so I'll give the floor, but I'll only say, don't try to fool people by saying this is not taking rights away; it is.

There's more coming. The Employment Standards Act changes that are coming this spring are going to go far beyond what's in this bill. This is nothing compared to what's coming, not to mention what you're doing around the Workers' Compensation Board, everything from getting rid of the IDSP, the Industrial Disease Standards Panel, the health and safety agency, which prevents accidents, and possibly eliminating WCAT, which is the appeals tribunal workers have to be able to get justice through the Workers' Compensation Board.

I thank you for this time in the debate and I urge members in this House not to vote for this legislation because it is simply a take-back and a reduction of benefits to workers in this province and that is not what you were elected to do.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): It's my pleasure to rise today to support Bill 49. I'd like to make a couple of points. We're dealing here with stage 1 of the employment standards reform. What we have done is we have not changed any of the standards; in fact we have improved the standards. I refer to the pregnancy leave and parental leave provisions, which is good news for the province. We're making sure the service is intact for anyone who takes that type of leave. Also, with vacation pay and vacation time, we're making sure that the service is intact for a 12-month period and the percentage is based on that 12-month period. These are necessary changes and they're also an improvement to the standards.

The second point I'd like to make is that we're not only changing the collection process, but we're improving it. Currently, we're collecting about 25 cents on the dollar for unpaid accounts. What we're going to do is use private collection services to collect moneys owed to employees, and employees will receive moneys owed to them in a more efficient and timely manner.

The collection process will change because we'll be focusing on non-union employees. Union employees will be able to rely on the grievance procedure to collect in any disputes that are involved with their own procedure under the collective agreement. I think that's a positive use of the resources. Currently, unions enforce the Employment Standards Act, the health and safety act and also the Human Rights Code where they have it in the collective agreement. So we're not changing anything by this particular provision; we're basically allowing the unions to represent their members better and I think that's a positive step.

Also, with respect to collections, we're looking at having the employment standards officers just enforce the

act and not do the collections, because the process was changed in 1993 by the NDP, which resulted in the disbanding of the collection unit. One of the major things I found during the hearings I attended was that there was a consensus that of the insolvencies and the non-payment, about 50% of the claims were in that category.

What we found was that there is a cry for the federal Bankruptcy Act to be changed. Nothing has been done by the federal Liberals to change that act and it has to be changed to protect the workers who are faced with situations where they won't get any money. We're urging changes and there were changes suggested by all parties with respect to the federal Bankruptcy Act which have to emerge.

Other process changes are important. As I mentioned, we're dealing with where collective agreements are in place. Employees and employers will use their own grievance procedure. The consensus was that this was a faster procedure, that you could have the grievance procedure exhausted within 30 days and go to arbitration and enforce it. We believe that process of allowing unions to represent their workers is a positive step.

In the last few moments of the debate, I'd just like to say that the process that was conducted was a full process dealing with workers, unions and employers throughout the province. I'd like to say that the workers, in dealing with the employers who are out there, and the associations, we're not dealing with bad bosses; we're dealing with good bosses who educate their employees and employers on the Employment Standards Act.

I think the measures that have been taken are very positive and what I'm looking forward to is stage 2 of the reform of the Employment Standards Act so we can do more changes that will benefit the province, the workers, the unions and also the employers in this province, so I look forward to phase 2 of the reform, and I thank you, Speaker, in my support of this bill.

The Speaker: Mr Baird moves third reading of Bill 49.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that this vote will be deferred till immediately after question period on Monday.

The Speaker: Do we have agreement for deferral until after question period on Monday? Agreed.

It now being 6 of the clock, I adjourn this House till Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Lines	Should read:
109	4585	2	47	Well, a commitment to Bishop Tonnos from the Premier

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Lundi 21 octobre 1996



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAURA SABIA

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): With the passing of Laura Sabia, Canada has lost one of its most influential citizens. Laura, as we all knew her in St Catharines, was an outspoken advocate for women in politics and public life. Her determination and persistence, her willingness to offend the powerful and to be outrageous to make a point brought her to the leadership of the movement to have women assume positions of importance and influence in Canada. While others tiptoed around controversial issues, Laura took them on with willingness and glee, raising the ire of her opponents and cheers from her supporters.

When an issue affecting women's rights was before the House of Commons or the Legislative Assembly, we could count on Laura to be watching from the gallery, offering encouragement to those with whom she agreed and biting criticism to those who stood in the way of progress for women. Indeed, my last conversation with Laura took place in the Speaker's gallery of this House.

As chair of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, chair of the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women, a radio talk show host, a newspaper columnist, school trustee or city councillor, Laura Sabia displayed courage and commitment and stirred debate on the significant issues of the day.

Those of us who had the privilege of knowing Laura personally were aware of her compassion and her kindness, characteristics often masked by her public persona. Recipient of the Order of Canada and an honorary degree from Brock University, Laura Sabia will be remembered with fondness and admiration for many years to come by those of us who knew her and by her family and friends.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): All of us recognize that this week is the week we're going to face the Days of Action sponsored by the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Metro Network for Social Justice. All of us in this House, as democrats, recognize the right of the populace to assemble to petition for change in government policy.

The government House leader and others in the government have complained that this Days of Action

protest will make it difficult for people to get the services they pay for. That statement ignores the fact that the Harris government is eroding those very services that taxpayers pay for. Classroom education, health care, child care and social assistance are all suffering as a result of the actions of this government.

The Harris counterrevolution is tearing at the very heart of the social fabric of Ontario; it is aimed at destroying the sense of community in our province. The purpose, of course, of the government doing this is to pay for its tax scheme.

The Harris government is disrupting the lives of many, many Ontarians; it's polarizing Ontario society. It's time that Ontario came together to begin to rebuild its sense of community as a caring society that has made Ontario strong economically and socially, that has made this province a good place to live and work.

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): As the parliamentary assistant for small business, I rise today to inform members of the Legislature that this week is National Small Business Week. Sponsored by boards of trade and chambers of commerce from across the country, this week recognizes the important contributions of small business to the Canadian economy.

Small business is vital to our economy. In Ontario alone, small business accounts for about 98% of all business and hires 87% of today's new employment. That's why our government has acted quickly to clear the path for small business and create a competitive environment for job creation. Since taking office last year, we've listened to small business concerns and have worked with them to reduce taxes, implement fair labour laws, eliminate unnecessary regulation, develop export markets, improve access to capital and create jobs.

The results of our efforts are obvious. Ontario has created over 150,000 new jobs since last year, and most of them are in the small business sector.

As National Small Business Week gets under way, I encourage all members to participate in the many activities happening in their area and to recognize the outstanding achievements of Ontario's entrepreneurs.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): The Canada Safety Council has designated this week, October 20 to 26, as National School Safety Week. Here in Ontario, the School Bus Operators' Association of Ontario is recognizing this week as School Bus Safety Week, since

school buses are an extension of the classroom. Many school bus carriers are sponsoring special school assemblies, mall displays and public service announcements.

In my own riding, the joint transportation committee of the two Essex county school boards is a driving force to improve school bus safety and has collected over 30,000 signatures to give the school bus law teeth.

I'm proud to be able to bring forward my private member's Bill 78 for second reading debate on November 28 to strengthen the law protecting school children. I am honoured to have the support of the Essex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, the Essex County Board of Education and the Ontario school bus association, as well as numerous other boards, municipalities and other Ontario organizations. I ask all members for their support on November 28.

Remember, when you see a school bus with its lights flashing and safety arm down, you must stop. You cannot proceed until the arm is retracted and the lights stop flashing. The lives of our children depend on it.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On Friday this past week, representatives of a number of faith communities issued a joint statement, Call for Social Justice, in advance of the Metro Days of Action, October 22 to 27 this year. They stated: "...we have come together with a common ethical and moral concern.... We have joined together to declare that every person in the province of Ontario has fundamental rights which no government may justifiably extinguish."

The statement which they released recognizes "the need for our province to live within its means and to put its fiscal house in order," but states, "We cannot allow an undue burden to fall on the impoverished, unemployed and marginalized, the young or the challenged in our society."

"We believe in the right to open and democratic government, scrutiny of government actions, due process of the law, full parliamentary debate and consultation with affected groups on all legislative proposals and fundamental changes in law or rights.

"We believe in the right to receive adequate social services and assistance.

"We believe in the right to freedom of expression and opinion without fear of reprisal.

"We believe in the right of all citizens to adequate and affordable housing.

"We believe in the right of every woman to a full and equal place in society.

"We believe in the right to universally accessible, comprehensive and confidential health care."

The statement concludes by calling "upon the present government of Ontario to acknowledge and respect these rights," in particular urging "the government not to resolve the fiscal deficit by creating a social deficit in its place."

I, for one, endorse wholeheartedly that statement.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I proudly stand in the House today to mark the start of National White Ribbon Against Pornography Week, also known as WRAP. The campaign runs from October 20 to 27.

White ribbons have been distributed to all members of the House. I request that they consider wearing same, showing their opposition to pornography in our community.

The effects of pornography on our children threaten the security and health of our citizens and families.

The White Ribbon Campaign against pornography is promoted by the Catholic Women's League of Canada and 900 members located in Cambridge. They are very concerned about the increased availability of hard-core pornography being distributed on the Internet. It is a growing problem and must be addressed. The focus this year is "Pornography Hurts."

I urge all members of the House to support National WRAP Week and its principles.

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'd like to join the member for Brampton North to remind the House that this is Small Business Week in Ontario.

We all acknowledge the major role small business plays in job creation and economic expansion. Small business has dominated the personal service, retail and primary industries sectors. I encourage the government to persevere in its commitment and efforts towards helping small business.

Small Business Week is an opportune time to remind the government that last week it was reprimanded by the Provincial Auditor for its unacceptable corporate tax collection procedures. According to the auditor the government is losing tens of millions of dollars annually due to the lack of staff needed for audits of the growing number of small businesses. Just last week the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism took much pride in how much the government has done for small businesses. But let me point out that small entrepreneurs paying their just share of corporate taxes are concerned that the government's focus on cuts is unfairly placing them at a competitive disadvantage against small business entrepreneurs who neglect to meet tax obligations.

It appears that the government is not as small business oriented as it would like the business community to believe. The government's focus on slashing and burning is not providing a boost to business but a boost for tax evasion and delinquencies.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Sexual harassment affects many workplaces, and ours is not exempt. One of the issues we look at in sexual harassment is the fact that it affects so fundamentally the people who are victims of this kind of treatment.

One such woman was Theresa Vince. Theresa Vince was murdered last year in her place of employment — Sears in Chatham, Ontario — by her sexual harasser, who then took his own life.

It is a very serious issue for us to understand, the pain of a community, the pain of fellow employees, the pain of family, when a situation that had been clearly identified by Theresa Vince was not resolved and she was left alone with her sexual harasser. This is an extreme case of what happens when sexual harassment is allowed to take its way in the workplace.

Theresa's family and friends are here in the gallery today. They worked very hard in the last few weeks collecting signatures on two petitions, which it will be my honour to bring to the Legislature later this afternoon, with more than 10,500 signatures requesting an inquest and an inquiry and requesting a special committee to look at this whole issue of sexual harassment and to work at finding ways to resolve this problem.

I think today we all join in our sympathy for the family of Theresa Vince and can show that by taking action on these petitions.

LAURA SABIA

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I rise today to recognize the achievements of Laura Sabia, who passed away on Thursday after a 19-year battle with Parkinson's disease. She was 80 years old.

Ms Sabia will best be remembered as a pathbreaker in the pursuit of equal rights and opportunities for women. She was instrumental in the creation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967. She was also the co-founder of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and served as its national chair from 1969 to 1973, a time of considerable progress for Canadian women. In recognition of her efforts, Ms Sabia was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1974 and received the Governor General's Award in 1983 for her role in the famous "persons" case.

When we reflect upon the gains made by Canadian women over the years, they are due in no small part to the tireless efforts of Laura Sabia. I ask the House to join me today in offering our sincerest condolences to Laura Sabia's daughters Maureen, Colleena and Mary-Michele, son Michael, and granddaughters Kate and Laura.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to introduce some guests we have today in the Speaker's gallery.

First of all, we have the Honourable Paul McEwen, who is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia. Welcome.

Will you also please welcome Mr Gregory L. Johnson, Consul General of the United States of America. Welcome.

ANNIVERSARY OF MEMBER'S ELECTION

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent, and I believe we have unanimous consent, to pay a tribute to the member for Nickel Belt on the occasion of his 25th anniversary in the House.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I guess we have unanimous consent then? Agreed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm very privileged to be the representative of the Liberal Party who gets an opportunity to pay tribute to the member for Nickel Belt, Floyd Laughren as we all know him, on his 25 years of service to the people of Nickel Belt and the people of the province of Ontario.

When we think of it, his being elected in October 1971, this is indeed remarkable, particularly when we look at the fact that we've had three different political parties govern in the province of Ontario and we've had several what you would call waves or tides that have come in and come out. Floyd Laughren, the member for Nickel Belt, has survived those, and the reasons are quite obvious to those of us who sit in this assembly and to the residents of the riding of Nickel Belt who have returned him in so many elections.

If we think of it, once again we would note that it is unlikely that New Democrats alone would be able to send Mr Laughren to this House. He has been able to gather the support of people of other political parties who have ignored perhaps the party label, and of course of independent-minded people who have selected him as their representative.

His attributes are many. He is known in this House as an extremely determined and committed individual who has persevered in those issues in which he has been particularly interested. I know that those who are involved in the workforces in the mines and in other extraction industries in the Nickel Belt area, in the Sudbury area, are grateful to him for raising many of the issues which were not so popular in years gone by, including the environmental issues and those involving occupational health and safety.

1350

Floyd Laughren is a man of modest background. He doesn't come from a rich background or a powerful background, and yet he rose to the position of Deputy Premier of the province of Ontario and Minister of Finance. But all of us in this House who have sat with him over the years have recognized that he did not change in his demeanour or his attitude towards others in society. He was still the Floyd Laughren that we knew when he was first elected and still the Floyd Laughren that we know as a friend and colleague.

Floyd also has the distinction of being liked by people on all sides of the House. That's difficult, particularly when you are as arduous a debater as Floyd has been over the years. He has been hard-hitting in his criticism of successive governments and not easy on the opposition when they were critical of the policies of the government with which he was involved. Yet through this exchange in the House, in this assembly and in other places, he has maintained friendships with many of us who sit in this assembly at this time.

He is, I think I can say, an unapologetic socialist, though the New Democrats now use the terminology "social democrat." Over the years I have known him, Floyd has been an unapologetic socialist. He has not yet seen Inco nationalized. However, where there is life, there is hope. As I always noted, I don't think that

everything is being done at Falconbridge that he had hoped would be done at Falconbridge, because there's still something being done in Norway. But his accomplishments far outweigh those things which he was unable to achieve either in government or opposition, and the number one accomplishment is maintaining integrity in a time and in a place where that's often difficult to do. But he is a man of integrity.

He is a personal friend of mine and has been for a number of years. Members of this assembly may not know, but we would be involved in some rather vociferous and energetic exchanges in this House and then meet after question period to travel to a sports event in one location or another. For the public to see on their television sets or to read in the newspapers the account of the exchange in the House, they would believe they were two arch enemies confronting one another, but that of course is the nature of the individual that we have with us today.

The last thing I would say is that Floyd has always fought hard for his causes and has been a partisan, but he has avoided the cheap shots which sometimes come with politics at all levels. He has kept the debate on a very high level. He has been a class act over the years and continues to be.

I had the privilege of attending his 20th anniversary dinner in Sudbury in October 1991, a most enjoyable event attended by many of different political backgrounds, of different social backgrounds. He was suitably roasted, I think until almost 12 o'clock in the evening, at that time. He is going to be toasted again. He's not toast yet. That may come some day, but he's not toast yet. But he will be toasted and honoured this Saturday at the Steelworkers' hall in Sudbury by so many of his friends and colleagues. We wish him well on that evening. I will have the opportunity to attend that, barring a snowstorm in northern Ontario, and I look forward to the opportunity, as I know many would, to pay tribute to him.

Lastly, an observation I once made of Floyd on one of his anniversaries — I can't remember which one it was — which I think is probably one of the greatest compliments one can pay to a person. That is that there are no pretensions with Floyd Laughren; what you see is what you get.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Oh, no.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): "Oh, no." You should be saying that, Floyd.

I've known Floyd Laughren for about 23 years. I knew him about two years before I was elected to this place in 1977. I've known him so long in this setting I never did really know if he ever — did you ever have a real job?

In 1975 and 1976, I was perhaps one of maybe a dozen people in this province who subscribed to the Hansard debates of the Legislature. At that time you could go to the Queen's Printer and have the Hansard debates sent to you, and as an experiment while I was practising law I would from time to time leaf through these Hansard debates. I would notice how often Floyd would speak. He had a sister-in-law who lived about three or four houses from me in Manotick and I would visit with him socially from time to time, so I thought I would track his performance in the Legislature. Floyd

was absolutely astounded that anybody in this province would ever read Hansard and, number two, that they would notice that he hadn't spoken for a period of six to eight months during that period of time. He was most embarrassed about that. Notwithstanding that, he has made up for it in spades on many, many occasions around here, as you all know.

Floyd has in my view exemplified what a parliamentarian should be all about. I believe that far too often we see members of the Legislature who feel that their loyalty to their constituency, their loyalty to their party, encompasses their whole life. But I believe that there are a number of individuals who come to this place who also feel a very important third loyalty, and that's to the institution of our Parliament here in Queen's Park and our parliamentary system.

So it was not surprising to me that when Floyd became the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier for the province, when he was asked a really good question in the House, he would come across to us in opposition at that time and say how much he enjoyed that particular question, and he would try to give you a fair answer if in fact it was a testing question. Not only that, but I have noticed that when we did get into a skirmish here in the Parliament of Ontario Floyd would often take a position to protect the institution rather than just protecting the position of his party or himself. I find that very important for the longevity of this institution and for the democracy of the people of Ontario.

Floyd is a family man. I've met his family. If you can believe it, his wife is even left of him. I've referred to her not as Pink Floyd or Mrs Pink Floyd but in other ways, as Floyd knows. That is a personal joke.

Floyd has maintained a camaraderie with other members of the Legislature from all parties past and present and is part of the alumni of this august institution. I hope not only that he will continue on in his position now as MPP, but that when he retires from this place, if ever, he would continue his contact with all members of the Legislature.

I probably exemplify just about everyone in what they think of Floyd. Floyd, I've enjoyed your participation in the parliamentary process. I believe it has been done with integrity. I believe you've represented your party well. I believe you've represented your constituents well. But most of all I've enjoyed your friendship, as many other members of this Legislature have as well.

1400

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I will keep my remarks short because I know the member for Nickel Belt will want to have something to say about this occasion.

We need to recognize that the member for Nickel Belt has quite a diverse reputation. At home he is known as a good constituency person. I first got to know him in the party back in the 1970s when I was a university student, and at that time he went by the name Pink Floyd. I understand he's changed somewhat. He's known in the Legislature as a tough critic who has an excellent sense of humour, and he's apparently known to the Toronto Sun as the Legislature's sexiest man. So you can see that in 25 years he's covered a lot of ground.

I think the secret of Floyd is that he treats everyone with a great deal of respect. He treats his constituents with a great deal of respect; he treats his adversaries in his constituency with a great deal of respect. Even when he comes here — and I've seen him give profound tongue-lashings both in opposition and in government to opposing members — he always takes the time later to say to folks, "Nothing personal intended, just don't say those things to me next time."

He almost became Speaker of this House, and I'm sure the government is happy that he did not become Speaker of the House. It would have cost a fortune to have the length of the gowns changed and all those things dealt with. There may have been other reasons as well, but that certainly stands out.

Floyd, I believe, has the respect of all members of this Legislature, in part because he has shown tremendous longevity here but also because he is someone who really knows how this place works and he treats this place with a great deal of respect. He knows that this Legislature is not part of the trappings of democracy, it is the core of democracy and that what happens here is important for everyone in the province. He's exhibited that through 25 years.

He's seen tides come and tides go. He has seen minority governments of one stripe or another. He has seen unexpected majority governments come and go, and he has a lot of advice for those who care to listen on the longevity of tidal waves or waves of any kind.

He has dealt with almost every critic portfolio that one could have in this Legislature. He is someone who has dealt with the most difficult financial issues, both in opposition and in government, and he's someone who has dealt with the most basic of community issues, both in opposition and in government.

He has never forgotten his roots. Though he became deputy leader of this caucus, though he became Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, he has never forgotten the people at home nor the people who send him here at each election. I think that tells you where his heart is and what he believes in most firmly.

Floyd Laughren, I suspect, will be another of those elected representatives who, if he ever does choose to leave this place — and I suspect it will be his choosing, not anyone else's — will probably write a book and he will of course —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Pink Floyd on the Wall.

Mr Hampton: Someone has just remarked the title of the book might be Pink Floyd on the Wall. Of course any book that he might choose to write would treat us to a great deal of humour, because he has a tremendous sense of humour. I suspect that as I've watched him make notes in this place, he's actually been writing that book for some time, or writing the anecdotes for that book for some time.

We want the member for Nickel Belt to enjoy his celebrations this weekend. We understand that this celebration usually raises a great deal of money for his riding association and so we want him to enjoy a particularly successful celebration this weekend.

On behalf of everyone in our caucus, we say to you, Floyd, that we very much respect and admire the work

you have done for 25 years. We especially like your sense of humour. Floyd does not tell "short" jokes; he tells sheep jokes. If anyone on the government side has not been treated to his assortment of these, you really are missing a treat.

We admire the work you've done. We admire your sense of humour and your sense of respect for this place. All of us are very honoured to say that we are your colleagues. Thank you very much.

Mr Laughren: It's always difficult responding to these kinds of things. I just wonder where you all were on that vote for Speaker. The only person whom I know stayed with me, even after my name was off the ballot, was the Premier, and I appreciate that very much.

The Speaker: Order.

Laughter.

Mr Laughren: I want first of all to thank the three people who've spoken.

Jim Bradley has indeed been a friend for a very long time, and it is true that we have attended the occasional sporting event in the evening. I wanted to pick up on something he said about being a socialist versus a social democrat. Stephen Lewis, in his inevitable fashion, when I drifted a bit from a leftist position in caucus one day, said that I had changed from being a rugged socialist to a ragged one. I think that's what you were trying to say.

To Norm Sterling, the member for Carleton — I mean, for Norm Sterling to wonder out loud whether or not I'd ever had a real job? I just say to him that anybody who, before they get elected or even after they get elected, reads Hansard has never had a real life.

On a more serious note, it does seem strange to have been here for 25 years, and I of course owe a great deal to a lot of people. One does not do this by oneself. My family comes first, and they are here with me today: my wife, Jeanette, and my daughter, Tannys, and my son, Joshua. And of course the good voters in Nickel Belt, contrary to what Jim Bradley says, are New Democrats. Also, over the years my caucus mates, and in particular the leaders, every time have been very supportive. I didn't support any of them, but I was always surprised at how much support they in turn gave me. The present leader is no exception to that, and I appreciate that very much.

There are lots of unsung heroes in politics. People don't think of politics and heroes in the same breath these days, but I must say that my constituency office staff and my legislative staff have been absolutely wonderful and are second to none anywhere in this province.

There are other unsung heroes, and that's at the local level. I could not have kept returning to this place if it wasn't for what we call our local riding executive. I'm sure all of you understand that better than people outside the political process, that it's your riding executive, particularly your riding president, who keep things moving and make things happen and make sure, to the best of their ability, that we return here to Queen's Park.

Finally in the list of unsung heroes are the people who make this place a good place to work, and that's the table officers, who I think get little enough credit for the work they do, and beyond that, the clerks of committees. I want to tell you that I have been saved from making bad

decisions as Chair of committees for many years more often than I care to confess by the quality of the clerks we have who help us chair committees at this place. They deserve a lot more credit than they ever get.

1410

I obviously like politics or I would not have been here this long. I like public administration. Quite frankly, I like politicians as well. I like their commitment, I like their toughness and I like their scrappiness. I appreciate that very much among my friends and my adversaries here as well. All of that doesn't guarantee 25 years, but I can remember when I was in the States back when committees used to travel a bit — which broadened our minds a great deal, I might add — I ran into an elderly senator. I didn't ask him this question. Somebody else asked him, "To what do you attribute your longevity?" He said, "Two things, my son." People called you "my son" in those days.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Jesse Helms?

Mr Laughren: Yes, it might have been Jesse Helms, although that's the first time I've ever said his name out loud and I promise never to again. Anyway, he said, "You need two things for longevity: grey hair and haemorrhoids." The person wasn't going to let well enough alone and said: "I don't get it. Why?" He said, "You need the grey hair for always having that look of distinction, and of course you need the haemorrhoids for always having a look of concern."

Interjection: What about you, Floyd?

Mr Laughren: I'm halfway there.

I have enjoyed representing the constituency and the people in the riding. I've enjoyed this chamber very much as well, because it's not always what it appears on the outside. I've enjoyed it in opposition and in government. It's more difficult in government but also a lot more challenging and a lot more fun. I look forward to enjoying it again some day.

I must say that politics has been a fascinating career, full of frustrations, but a lot of good humour too. It was funny that someone mentioned about writing a book and writing out anecdotes. I haven't done that, but there are some anecdotes that stay in my mind. I remember one afternoon when the debate was droning on — "droning" is the only appropriate word I could use — and Elie Martel, the former member for Sudbury East, was in full flight; and Elie could be in full flight, as you know. He wrapped up his speech by saying, "So, Mr Speaker, what I'm saying to these rascals over there" — it was a Tory government at that time; some things never change. He said, "In summary, what you people over there are doing is whistling upstream." Jim Breithaupt, who was a wonderfully funny Liberal member from Kitchener, leaned forward and said, "Elie, is that anything like rowing in the dark?"

There has been lots of fun in this place. I've enjoyed it very much and I want to thank you all very much for your sentiments today; they mean a lot to me. Since I have a question during question period today, no more Mr Nice Guy.

The Speaker: At this point in time I'm supposed to tell everyone in the Legislature that I'll get this Hansard

and send the appropriate copies to the affected member. I promise to do that. I promise to send them to Mr Laughren, and I may add a few notes of my own on the back. Thank you very much for your time.

Mr Cooke: Send a copy to Norm.

The Speaker: The member says a copy to the member for Carleton as well. I promise I'll do that as well.

I might add to the member for Nickel Belt, it's been a great pleasure for me as well to sit in this place in opposition to you, specifically as a critic. When I was a critic to you as finance minister for a very brief period of time, I was halfway there; I just didn't have the grey hair. That was the difficulty when I was dealing with the finance minister.

Mr Laughren: You're halfway there, too.

The Speaker: Yes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMA AGREEMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. While it appears today that you may have bought a temporary reprieve from the crisis that you have created for patients in the province of Ontario, we are extremely concerned that it is the patients themselves who will end up paying the price for your incompetent management.

An OMA staff member was quoted as saying that in order to pay for your deal, patients might find a limit placed on the number of times certain tests or other procedures could be performed in a year and that they would be obliged to pay for certain services themselves. It's quite clear from the statements of the OMA today that they believe this is the direction that will be taken in order to find the savings needed.

Minister, you now have to find millions and millions to pay for this deal. We want you to provide an assurance today that it will not be paid for by a lessening of patient care. We want you to guarantee today that every service currently covered by OHIP will continue to be covered by OHIP and that patients will never be forced to pay out of their own pockets for the services they now receive from OHIP. Will you give that guarantee?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for the question. I think the real saving that we've committed to looking at with the Ontario Medical Association over the next weeks and months — and I remind all members that this is an interim agreement, that we do not have a great many of the details worked out between the parties and that, specific to the question that's been asked, more details will be available as we move into the month of December and by December 31, leading to a fuller agreement in January.

The real saving, if you look at the tentative agreement, which has yet to be agreed to by the full council of the OMA, is the underserviced area program. We spend millions of dollars moving the patients to the doctors, and the agreement says that we will now move the doctors to the patients. There's a great deal of money to be saved

there and that money will be reinvested in front-line services like doctors and other providers.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, it was months ago when you made it absolutely clear that you were prepared to find savings in the health care system by limiting the services that would be paid for by OHIP and indeed by putting new user fees in place. I take you back to Bill 26, which you set up in such a way that it would be the bureaucrats in OHIP and you, the Minister of Health, who would be able to decide what treatments would be paid for by OHIP and what treatments would not be paid for by OHIP. That's what we are now facing in Ontario.

We are facing a situation where it is the dollars you need to find that are going to determine what kind of care patients get. It will be decisions that are driven by the financial bottom line; it will not be decisions about patient care, it will not be decisions being made by doctors treating patients in their offices or in hospitals. People in this province have a right to know what price they will pay for the deal that you are prepared to make. What services do you intend to delist, to stop paying for? What services will patients have to pay for themselves?

Hon Mr Wilson: The parties have agreed to do some modernization or tightening of the schedule of benefits, but I don't think people should automatically jump to the conclusion that the honourable member is jumping to. Dr David Naylor, for example, puts out an atlas every two years and he talks about practice patterns in the province: where caesareans are done more often in one part of the province than the other, where time taken to perform certain procedures and tests is quite variant throughout the province.

In the tightening of the schedule, we'll be looking to Dr David Naylor and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences and their recommendations, and that may require greater patient education as well as provider education to find savings in that way. I've set a couple of parameters —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: I've set a couple of parameters around these discussions from my point of view, and that is, in no way can either party violate the Canada Health Act and in no way can we tamper with services and tests that are deemed medically necessary.

1420

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I don't believe you can camouflage this by talking about saving millions and millions of dollars with something you want to describe as practice patterns. This is about delisting health care; this is about less patient care. That's what this is all about. Beyond that, we are concerned that it is about less care for patients in hospitals as well, because it was just weeks ago when you made it very clear that you would be able to find dollars for physicians by taking savings out of hospital budgets.

We are already seeing the effect of the savings you have taken out of hospital budgets: We are seeing hospital closures, we are seeing thousands of nurses laid off, we are seeing less patient care in our hospitals now. We need your assurance today, an absolute assurance, that to pay for this deal you will not be taking more

dollars out of hospital budgets, we will not see more nurses laid off, we will not see even less care in our hospitals for patients in this province.

Hon Mr Wilson: I was trying to explain, and I thought the honourable member had it correct in her first couple of questions, that the doctors and the government are going to find savings within our budgets to offset the 6.5% holdback that was in effect and that now will come off November 1. That's along the lines that alternative payment plans save money, integrated delivery services save money, primary care reform, and eventually getting rid of the underserved area program in southern Ontario and all along the 401 corridor where towns and cities are applying right now. Those grants won't be necessary after we do the billing number measures.

I also want to challenge the member. Patient care is not decreasing in our excellent hospitals or in our hospital system in this province, and the honourable member has no evidence whatsoever to do that sort of fearmongering in her questions.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs McLeod: It's hard to believe the Minister of Health thinks that laying off 15,000 nurses doesn't reduce patient care.

The Speaker: Can you tell me who your question's to?

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is to the Minister of Education. Last year the royal commission on education released one of the most in-depth studies and probably one of the most widely agreed-upon visions of education in some long time in our province. Last week, one of the co-commissioners made this observation about your actions as minister. He wrote, and I quote, "Snobelen's approach is a virtual guarantee of failure." He also said that your statements "can be made only by someone who is either monumentally ignorant or deliberately trying to 'create a crisis.'"

I ask you, when you now talk about making \$1 billion more in cuts to education on top of your devastating \$400 million in cuts, are you being monumentally ignorant or merely trying to create another crisis?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's not in order. I understand that you read it into the record from the letter, and I let it go. But then you asked him directly, and that's not in order.

Mrs McLeod: I will rephrase the question. Minister, when you talk about making \$1 billion in new cuts on top of your devastating \$400 million in cuts already made, are you simply monumentally unaware of the impact of your cuts and what \$1 billion more in cuts would do to education or are you just trying to create another crisis?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Neither.

Mrs McLeod: I'm surprised that the minister didn't attempt to explain why his cuts are not really affecting children in the classroom, which is traditional for him. I think it's important that if the minister is not monumen-

tally unaware of the effect of his \$400 million in cuts, he should become aware of them. He should be aware of a survey that was done by 78 boards and what they found. They found that 46 boards have already cut their elementary teaching staff, that 25 boards have cut junior kindergarten, that seven boards have reduced or eliminated library resources, that 16 boards have cut elementary music, phys ed programs or family studies.

Minister, when you see this kind of damage that has been caused by \$400 million in cuts, how can you continue to say that \$1 billion more in cuts will not be devastating to classroom education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm surprised at the line of questioning. I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that our reduction of about 1.8% of the operating costs in education last year should have, could have been met by reductions in costs outside of the classroom. The former Liberal cabinet minister John Sweeney, in a commission that was put together by the previous government, found that 47% of our \$13.6-billion education system was spent outside of the classroom.

I remain committed and this government remains committed to having a system of education in Ontario that is more accountable, of higher quality and more affordable because, as I have told the Leader of the Opposition before on many occasions, we are not willing to send a bill for education to the students. We believe we should pay for it out of the operating revenues.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, anybody who has bothered to find out the impact of your cuts on classroom education has condemned the cuts, whether it is the former commissioners of the royal commission, whether it is teachers or whether it is parents. The head of the parent council, somebody you appointed, has said that what we really desperately need in our schools are spellers and good math books and effective teachers. The need for books and the need for teachers are there because of your cuts and the way your cuts have hit classroom education. In the one year that you've held this office, the number of students in Ontario has gone up by 19,000 and your cuts have taken 1,750 teachers out of the system. I think even you can figure out what that means in terms of more students in every classroom.

I ask you again, how can you possibly say that your cuts are not hurting kids? How can you possibly consider another billion dollars in cuts to education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will just again say to the Leader of the Opposition, as I've said on many occasions in this House before — I want to underline this again for the Leader of the Opposition — that this government is committed to increasing and enhancing the quality of education young people have in the province.

If the Leader of the Opposition chooses to look at all the studies that have been done over the last 15 years on education in this province, she will find that there is ample room to make reductions in the cost while enhancing the quality of education, and that is the commitment of this government. It has not changed over the last 15 months. It will not change. We are going to have a more accountable, a higher quality but a more affordable system of education in the province. That is our commitment.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I find it interesting that the government promised in the Common Sense Revolution that health care and education wouldn't be cut, but that's exactly what's being cut and that's exactly what the issues are today.

You have announced that you have some sort of tentative agreement with the OMA regarding physicians' services. We note when we read the fine print that there is a \$3.8-billion cap. We know from talking to physicians that utilization of the system has gone up. There are now 700,000 more people in Ontario and there are 140,000 more people over the age of 65 in Ontario, which means there is a greater demand for physicians' services, yet the money has not changed.

In view of the fact that the demand for services is going up but the money has not changed, does this mean that we will see at the end of the year physicians who, once they have reached their caps, will say, "That's it; I'm not practising any more. I'm taking a holiday"? Does this mean we're going to see longer and longer waiting lists for people who need health care? Is this what your agreement amounts to?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): No, not at all. 1430

Mr Hampton: I am glad the minister could give that assurance, because people will be watching. People are already finding that it is taking longer and longer to get the surgery they need and it is taking longer and longer to get the hospital bed they need because of the activities of this Minister of Health, so they'll be watching.

One of the other options for you, when physicians reach their cap, to take money out of the system — which is what you must do — is to delist services. Can you guarantee people across this province that they will not be paying out of their pockets for health care services that they need and that have been paid for by OHIP in the past?

Hon Mr Wilson: I think the honourable member interchanges the word "caps" with "thresholds." I will just say, with respect to the agreement, that we agreed to discuss thresholds as we move into a fuller agreement in January. The fact of the matter, as I've said, is that we will be looking to the experts over the next period of time. Nothing has even been put on the table with respect to medical services and tests right now, and I assure you that's the case. We'll be looking at modernizing and tightening the fee schedule and we will be guided by the experts in that process. Nobody can violate the Canada Health Act and — the honourable member said it in his own question — we have to ensure that people receive medically necessary services. That's what guides these discussions.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health misses an important piece of this picture. This government has enough money to give the president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce what will amount to a \$162,000-a-year give-back in taxes. They've got that amount of money and they've got enough money, I

gather, to give every other bank president in the province a fairly hefty tax break.

Yet the inevitable outcome of this so-called agreement is that people in Ontario who need health care services will see one of three things. They will see a delisting of health care services, which means they will have to pay out of their pockets, and we'll be watching very closely for that; or they will see physicians work until they believe they have essentially reached their threshold, in which case they will go on holidays; or they will see this minister take more money out of hospitals to pay the bill. Either way, the people of Ontario lose. Either way, this government has more money to give to its wealthy friends and less money for health care.

Can you guarantee (1) that you will not be delisting services and (2) that we will not see longer waiting lists for health care services? Because you haven't guaranteed them yet.

Hon Mr Wilson: I don't know what bank presidents have to do with the question and the topic at hand. At the end of the day, the health care budget in this province has not been cut one penny. That's in spite of the fact of the cut of more than \$2 billion from the federal Liberal government.

Secondly, the winners in this agreement are the patients of Ontario. The patients of Ontario win because doctors will now be going to communities where they're most needed. That saves money, it makes the system more efficient and it's what the patients of Ontario have been crying out for for many years. You've got a lot of gall given that you did nothing to solve that problem in your five years in office, and neither did the previous government. We've made a major step forward in concert with the Ontario Medical Association to better serve patients in this province. I'm darned proud of the accomplishments of this government and I'm darned proud of the Ontario Medical Association and this agreement.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Health as well. It could only be a Conservative Minister of Health who would cheer a \$162,000 tax cut for bank presidents who make over \$3 million already and then throw hundreds of nurses out of work and call that progress in health care. Only a Conservative Minister of Health could brag about that.

Since the Minister of Health is so sure that this can all be easily managed, I wonder if he would take the \$700-million contingency fund he had set aside to deal with physician problems, since he doesn't need that now, since this can all be handled by modernizing and laying off nurses, and agree that should go back into the hospitals where it came from? Because there are a lot of communities that are very worried about what is happening in their hospitals.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member must feel very isolated in this world when even the nurses aren't arguing that \$17.7 billion isn't enough to spend on health care. You find me another jurisdiction in the world where they spend more money

per person on health care than the province of Ontario and I'd be happy to talk to you further about it.

The first investments — and it's important that we stress this — that we made as a government and the largest investments in the history of health care to this point have been in nurses: \$170 million for 4,400 nursing and home care jobs in this province. Last week, the Premier and I announced expansion of the breast cancer screening program. That's 30 more sites with specially trained nurses and new jobs. Dialysis services: For the most part, the people who run the dialysis clinics are nurses and people who help nurses.

Every announcement we've made to date in the last 16 months since being in office has been for nurses except with two announcements, and that was the emergency on-call \$70-an-hour fee to keep 70 emergency rooms open in rural and northern Ontario and the direct contracts we did for communities like the communities you represent, the 21 communities' direct contracts for physicians. Otherwise, everything we've done, whether it be cardiac surgery, more money for high-growth hospitals —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Mr Hampton: I asked the Minister of Health a simple question. He said in the earlier question that this could all be handled by modernizing the system, so I suggested to him that if he thinks he can do that, then the \$700-million contingency fund should go back into some of those hospitals that are being desperately cut. Minister, you may come in here and tell your story, but physicians and people all across this province are telling another story, and nurses are telling another story.

That other story is this: Even hospitals that aren't being closed down by you are having to eliminate services because of the cuts you've made. For example in northwestern Ontario, my part of the province, if you were to go to Red Lake or Sioux Lookout or Dryden or Kenora or Atikokan or Fort Francis or Terrace Bay or Geraldton, you would see that in every one of those communities what they're being forced to do right now is to look at the elimination of specific services, and the only reason they're being forced to look at the elimination of specific services, like rehabilitation or delivering babies, is because of your cuts.

If you think this can all be handled by modernizing the system, why don't you take the \$700-million contingency fund and put it back into the hospital system so those communities won't have to cut those very necessary services?

Hon Mr Wilson: The process we're undergoing, in concert with the experts in the health care community and the people on the front line, is to close gaps in services. If there's a hospital that isn't delivering babies, as you said in your question, I'd like to know about that. That's a very serious accusation.

I spend a great deal of time with officials monitoring each area of the province and making sure that the community services are being beefed up at the same time that hospital restructuring is going on. If the honourable member is talking about gaps in services, we want to know about those gaps in services, because with the investments we've announced to date, we have the dollars

available to reinvest, to make sure, above all, that patients receive the continual and seamless care that they're entitled to as residents of this province.

Mr Hampton: Once again, the Minister of Health spins a good yarn, but it's just not related to reality. I'll be very specific again. You said you had a \$700-million contingency fund prepared in case there was a doctors' strike. You said there was \$700 million, and you told my colleague the member for Windsor-Riverside that this contingency fund would be used to find care for people should they need it, perhaps going outside the borders of the province.

It would appear that you don't have to use that \$700-million contingency fund. All I'm saying to you is, there is a whole bunch of communities out there where health care is hurting. There is a whole bunch of communities where the community hospital is being forced to eliminate a service that has been offered in that community and that people need. So I'll ask you the same question again, the question you don't seem to want to answer: If you don't need the \$700 million as a contingency fund in case of a doctors' strike, why not put that money into those communities that are being forced to cut services because of your health care budget cuts? Why not put it back into those communities and those community hospitals?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, the health care budget has not been cut one penny. It's up this year. Hospitals are not allowed to eliminate front-line, necessary services. Any proposal to do so has to go through the local DHC, which is not made up of politicians; it's made up of local representatives who sit there on behalf of their communities. Certainly we would not approve hospital operating plans that withdraw services that people need, at least until the DHC had identified reinvestment areas in community-based care, so that we don't have gaps in services and so that alternative services exist.

The honourable member is slightly misinformed. He should talk to the DHCs in the province, which very carefully monitor what hospitals are up to, check their operating plans and make darned sure there aren't new gaps in services being created as a result of restructuring.

In fact, all the evidence we've seen to date shows that gaps are being closed and that people are being served better and certainly will be served better in the future.

1440

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Premier. Over the last couple of weeks we have questioned you, we have questioned the Solicitor General and we have questioned the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations about Bill 75, the bill that will introduce slot machines to restaurants and bars across this province.

Numerous municipalities have voiced their objection to this bill. In fact, last week the Premier's home town of North Bay passed a motion opposed to video slot machines. But more important, Premier, you have been briefed on illegal gambling in Ontario where it says: "Legalized gambling has never replaced legal gambling.

Video gambling machines, video slot machines, are included in that."

Bill 75 introduces 20,000 slot machines across this province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question.

Mr Crozier: It's up to you, sir; it's on your shoulders. Will you withdraw Bill 75?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question and the whole issue. As you know, there are — estimates vary — 18,000 to 25,000 illegal VLTs currently operating in Ontario, according to estimates from the OPP.

The honourable member will know that previous governments have found it very difficult to deal with this issue. As part of the comprehensive strategy to deal with all forms of gaming, including VLTs, one of the things we have embarked upon is far more resources, far more control over the whole industry.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: Legalizing VLTs is one of those areas that we think will be beneficial. I might add that the city of North Bay has said they'd like to keep their simulated VLTs, break-open tickets and other areas of gambling in expressions to me. They want to make sure they get their piece of the pie.

Mr Crozier: Premier, I'd like you to tell me how you tell the difference between a simulated VLT, an illegal VLT and a legal VLT. You talk about illegal machines in the province. What the secret CISO report said, in the briefing notes you received, was, "Legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased with interest shown in bookies wagering on sporting events" and, I point out to you, "video gambling machines," video slot machines.

Premier, all I'm asking is this: In view of this report and in view of all that you've been advised, what could ever make you think that legalizing something that's now illegal is the way to control it? Take the advice, withdraw the bill and get on with business.

Hon Mr Harris: I understand that there is not unanimity in the province —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Every bar, every restaurant, every neighbourhood.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Hon Mr Harris: — as to whether they thought the province being involved in licensing and legalizing VLTs will reduce the number of illegal VLTs. I understand that there are some reports — the one you've reported — that say, "Not so."

Mr Crozier: It won't; the police say it won't.

Hon Mr Harris: However, perhaps the member will know that Mr Walter, head of the police association in Toronto, has said the exact opposite. He said this will in fact —

Mr Bradley: Everybody's wrong but you.

Hon Mr Harris: No. Mr Walter has said: "We support legalizing VLTs. This will give our men and women, the police on the front line, the ammunition and the resources they need." So there is not unanimity. I guess there never is with any decisions that governments make.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: The difference, though, perhaps between this government and Liberals and New Democrats is we make decisions. We do as we say we will do. We get things done and we will bring the illegal use of VLTs under —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order.

CHILD CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, this weekend, facing an angry crowd of over 1,000 parents and child care workers, you attempted to defend your government's record. You said: "We did bring good news to child care some months ago when we brought \$200 million more to child care in this province. This is a significant increase in funding."

You were of course referring to the 1996 Ontario budget speech by your finance minister in which he talked about the need to expand child care as "real and urgent." He used those words and I quote him. He said: "To address these concerns, I'm announcing today an enhancement of our child care funding that will provide over the next five years an additional \$200 million in support above current levels. This year we will spend \$600 million on child care — the highest in Ontario's history."

We're seven months into this budget year. You have not made one announcement with respect to the additional dollars that have been allocated. Not one more space has been created and thousands of parents are on waiting lists trying to place their children. Do you still intend to spend "\$600 million — the highest in Ontario's history" this year?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We have always said that the money available is up to \$600 million, depending on the pickup with municipalities in subsidies, which has always been the way it is. We are prepared to spend \$600 million on child care in this province because we think it's extremely important to do so. It's a support for working parents. It's also a support for early childhood education. We are committed to doing so.

Ms Lankin: I guess that would be good news if that was true, if in fact that money was there, available to be picked up if municipalities put their share in, but your ministry has a freeze on expansion of subsidies. Let me tell you about the ludicrous situation that creates in this province.

In Ottawa, this year, a child care centre was built. It was approved in the spring of 1995, it was confirmed by your government in the fall of 1995, construction was completed this year on the new Roberta Bondar school, and it sits empty. Why? Because your ministry won't provide the subsidies for the 30 spaces that are required there, the grants on the wage enhancement, nor the startup capital costs that are required in terms of equipment. It would be a minimal cost of under \$200,000 out of the new \$40 million that you've committed this year.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Ms Lankin: You won't commit it; it's sitting empty. If all it takes is the municipalities to pick it up, why is that centre empty? Why are there over 100 people on the waiting list for that centre? Why are there 3,500 people waiting for subsidies in Ottawa?

Minister, you're not telling us correct stuff in the House today when you say that money is available. If you're saying it is, will you give the grants? Will you give the subsidies to this centre? Will you open it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member may well know, when we took power a year ago and took a look at what was happening in the child care budget, we found that \$52 million had been spent by the previous government to try and force one sector of child care to convert to another sector of child care, without increasing spaces or increasing subsidies. We found that there were capital projects that had been told they could proceed when there was no money there for them to proceed. What we are doing is putting —

Ms Lankin: The centre sits empty. If the money's there, create the spaces.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: What we are doing is putting out proposals, consulting on those proposals and listening to the diversity of views of many people in the child care field before we make decisions.

1450

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): To the Minister of Environment and Energy: As you know, my riding, Sarnia, the Chemical Valley of Canada, is surrounded by water. There are 13 chemical plants and three refineries. There is a tremendous amount of concern about the environment. The minister is making significant changes to his ministry's marine service program. I would like to know why the minister is planning to ground his marine unit.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the honourable member for his concern because I too am very, very concerned about the quality of the Great Lakes water, about the plant life, actually the flora and fauna of those lakes. However, it's my job and the job of this government to ensure that this is done in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

As the Provincial Auditor pointed out, this program of past governments was costing \$500,000 a year to do. It was an underutilized program. We expect value for money in this government. As minister, I have a responsibility and obligation to make sure that the resources my ministry has are spent to the best effect, and therefore I'm going to do this program in a more efficient way.

Mr Boushy: I would like to ask the minister how the Ministry of Environment intends to fill any gaps in service which may occur due to the grounding of this fleet.

Hon Mr Sterling: This is of great concern, particularly to members who have ridings near the Great Lakes. We are considering a number of options to deal with this particular matter. The number one option deals with keeping at least one of the six vessels we have at the

present time and hiring a captain on a part-time basis. We let our two full-time captains go because they were only engaged for about 100 days a year and this was very inefficient.

We are also actively exploring partnerships with the private sector to provide this very valuable service. We think we can reduce the overall operating expenditures by either of these programs from \$500,000 to \$150,000 a year. We think we can do better for less.

JOB CREATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and the question is about the job crisis in Ontario. The Premier will know that he ran on a promise of creating 725,000 jobs over the next five years. It was a very specific promise and probably the most important promise you made during the campaign. That is 12,000 jobs a month, as you know.

It is now time to look at the progress. You issued your job report mid-week last week.

I have a document here called the Harris Missing Job Watch. What it shows is that after your first 15 months in office you are now 80,000 jobs short of the target you set for yourself — 80,000 jobs short. You're starting to fall way behind the target you committed yourself to, the promise you made of 12,000 jobs a month, each and every month, over five years. Why is it that you are now 80,000 jobs behind the target you set and the promise you made to the people of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question. I could do as you used to do in government: blame it on the federal government and their cutbacks and the transfers and the layoffs, but I won't do that, because we've actually been supportive of the federal government trying to get its house in order and reducing the number of people it employs as well.

Rather than that, let me go back and tell you we're not only on track, we're ahead of schedule to meet our commitments to the people of Ontario. I realize we had one month where there was a downturn. My Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, said, "Just a blip, not to worry, we're on the right track."

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: He's my Prime Minister, of this country; he's one of those Liberals I think has great credibility on the issue.

I might add that if you want to go over the last quarter, there have been 45,000 new jobs in the last quarter. If you translate that annually, that's 180,000 a year, way ahead of the schedule that we promised the people of Ontario.

Mr Phillips: If the Premier is proud of 57,000 more people out of work now than a year ago, you should be ashamed of yourself. If that is a proud record, I would hang my head in shame: 57,000 more people out of work in the province of Ontario in September of this year than September a year ago.

You made the promise after you looked at the federal budget, Premier: 12,000 jobs a month. This was your big promise, and you are now 80,000 jobs behind your goal — he shakes his head — 57,000 more people out of

work. If any of the Conservative caucus are proud of that record, you should be ashamed of yourself.

I'll make a very specific question to you, Premier. You promised 12,000 jobs a month. Can you commit that over the next 12 months the province of Ontario will see 12,000 jobs a month created? Can you at least commit over the next year that you will live up to that promise that you made a year ago?

Hon Mr Harris: You have a selective memory. I did not promise 12,000 a month. I hoped that we could create many more than 12,000 a month. What I promised was 725,000 over five years, and I want to say this to the honourable member. We expected that it would take some time to get over 10 years of disastrous policies. We expected to get consumer confidence back but that it wouldn't happen just overnight to get investor confidence back. The damage that had been done in the last 10 years was so severe that we expected that initially it might be a little slower.

However, year over year, we have created and there are now 99,000 more people working, year over year, than there were a year ago. For the first year, if you like — that's year over year for that, from whenever you want to start measuring — this is well on track to our objectives of when we thought the jobs would be created.

I might conclude with this. This is one member's response in the Toronto Sun of September 7 to the job figures. "It is very solid job growth," said Liberal MPP Gerry Phillips.

1500

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Attorney General. The Attorney General has been accused by members of completely bungling the handling of the family support program. Those of us who work with our constituency office know that is putting it mildly. I have over 50 cases in my own constituency office, and the minister indicated he'd look after these cases if we brought them to his attention. These people have indicated they would be prepared to have their name used in the assembly.

The first one I bring to the Attorney General's attention is a Ms Cathy Kiddle, who has two children. Her payments, the payments from her ex-spouse, have been deducted at source but the family services plan is not forwarding them to her. Her ex-husband now is claiming custody because she's unable to provide appropriate care for her children. A court order in August 1996 changed her support from \$800 a month to \$1,400 a month, and she's now over \$3,000 in arrears.

The second one —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Laughren: I wanted one more example if I might, Mr Speaker.

Lorna Wright got her last payment in August and now is in arrears of over \$2,500. Ms Wright phoned the family services plan office, the number — get this; she kept track, she kept count — 386 times before someone called her back, and the person who returned her calls wasn't

even a case worker and couldn't answer her questions. She's still waiting for someone to answer her questions.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member is quite right that the family support plan has had a history of receiving phone calls and not having people available to make the calls in return and to answer the questions people have.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's very difficult to hear the Attorney General. I would ask you to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie, I understand what you're saying. It's very difficult to hear the Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: That's quite simply the very reason we are going through the reorganization that we are going through: to provide the family support plan with modern technology, to provide the family support plan with an ability to answer the calls and solve the problems right then and there.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harnick: That is quite simply the reason we are going through the reorganization that we're now going through.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Sudbury East.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I say to the minister that it's about time you started to accept some responsibility for the cuts you have made since August to the family support plan. This minister cut 290 experienced staff, this minister closed eight regional offices, and now women and children who used to receive regular payments, like the constituents of the member for Nickel Belt, are not. That's your fault, no one else's.

Let me raise another case with the Attorney General today, about a woman and a family who used to receive regular support payments until August of this year, until the cuts imposed by the Attorney General. Ms Disley, who lives in Sudbury, did not receive her October 6 payment; she did not receive her October 20 payment. The employer involved has advised us that the payments were made. She is now \$1,400 in arrears. She cannot pay her hydro bill. Her son needs glasses; she has had to put that on hold.

What do you say to Ms Disley and other families on whose backs you're trying to finance the tax cut?

Hon Mr Harnick: Quite simply, this is a problem that is not a new problem with the family support plan. We are reorganizing the family support plan. We are providing the family support plan —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harnick: That is quite simply the reason we are reorganizing the plan and providing technology so the plan will work better, so we will be able to process cheques better. I might tell you that we are now processing 25% more cheques a day than we've ever been able to. We will have a modern technology centre that will be able to answer questions for people immediately, and we are now changing the family support plan so we can develop means of actually enforcing orders, something the former government didn't have the guts to do.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Community-based schools run by parent and community volunteers bring decision-making to the lowest level: the level of the front-line. Community or charter schools reduce bureaucracy and increase the funds available for the classroom.

In 1974, New York City's Central Park East Secondary School in Harlem became locally managed and controlled. Twenty-five years later its college success rates were double those of other schools in the area. Parents were poor — 85% of students were black or Hispanic — but the parents cared more for their kids than the bureaucracy. Local decision-making for local needs.

What is the future of community or charter schools in Ontario?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Scarborough West for the question. There has been a lot of debate in education communities about what constitutes a community school or a charter school, and those terms are used interchangeably in some conversations. But there's little doubt that the most critical decisions that are made in education are made at or near the classroom by teachers and principals and parents and students.

There's been a lot of speculation about the consideration our government is now giving to changes in funding and governance, but I want to assure the member for Scarborough West and other members in this chamber that these changes are being looked at from a viewpoint of making sure that every student in the province —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Snobelen: — has the same opportunity to a quality education and that the vital link between parents and teachers is enforced and enhanced and that these decisions made close to the classroom can be made in openness.

I can assure the member for Scarborough West that the cornerstone of any of these reforms will be a regional governance structure and a community involvement in our schools.

Mr Jim Brown: Community or charter schools are the only schools in New Zealand. They're popular in England, in New Brunswick and in the United States. Charter schools are not elitist schools for the rich. They allow small class sizes, choice and teacher accountability to poorer people, something only private schools now offer.

My culturally diverse riding wants its children to succeed more than anything. My constituents are not blessed with money; they have to take what we give them. But we can give them a chance. Let them look out for their kids. They'll do a great job.

Minister, what can I tell those interested parents and teachers who want to operate charter schools?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I have spoken to the Minister of Education in New Zealand, the Minister of Education in New Brunswick, the Minister of Education in Alberta. We've talked about charter schools, and we are of course monitoring the situation in New Brunswick and in Alberta now, looking to be instructed by their experience.

As I've said earlier, there is no question that parent and community involvement in the school enhances

education, no question about that at all, and as we look at the changes we might have in governance and education, we'll be looking at the experiences of other people around the world in this circumstance. But I want to assure the member for Scarborough West and the other members in this chamber that without doubt you have to have an excellent public education system if charter schools are to work, and we will do that.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you know, Oracle Research conducted a poll in Sudbury which showed that 83% of the community feel there will be a deterioration in health care services because of your restructuring. Tomorrow the Coalition to Save Sudbury Hospitals will meet at the Mine, Mill Hall at 7 pm, and on Wednesday at 1 pm a human chain of resistance will form around each of our local hospitals, asking you to save our health care system.

Minister, several members of my community have received phone calls from an individual identifying herself as being from Kerbel and Associates, asking for public reaction to the commission's recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Bartolucci: My question is three-fold: Why did you hire this firm, what are you going to do with the results, and how much are you paying this communications firm to provide you with information regarding a restructuring plan that you know the community has already voiced concern about?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I don't know anything about the phone calls by this particular firm. Second, as is the case in these processes, I encourage your community to get involved, and they're obviously quite involved. It's the 30-day period now where the community is to respond, and they would be very wise, in addition to their demonstrations, to make sure they have concrete, data-supported and well-thought-out arguments to the commission during this very crucial period of decision-making.

1510

Mr Bartolucci: To the head of the board of governors of one of the hospitals, when asked the person, "Who are you?" the individual said, "I'm working for the Ministry of Health and I've been retained by Catherine Steele," who works in your ministry. Minister, if you don't know anything about it, your ministry's out of control.

Last Friday I launched a postcard campaign which invites the community to tell you directly about their displeasures and to plead with you to save our health care system in Sudbury. Within the next two weeks, you'll be receiving thousands of these postcards. My question is, will you listen to the voices of the people of Sudbury when they flood your office with postcards and will you change the direction of this report which plows under the services and jobs the citizens of Sudbury count on you to preserve?

Hon Mr Wilson: In the interim, I've received a note to indicate that Carol Kerbel's company is working for the Ministry of Health. I don't know what they're doing making phone calls in your community other than doing

a general assessment of health care issues, as I know they're doing across the province, so it would be appropriate to phone those areas that are undergoing restructuring. After all, it's the people of Ontario who own the health care system, not the politicians.

As is the gist of your question, it's important that we know what communities think about the changes that are going on. Again, though, we're in that 30-day period where concerns are best directed towards the commission, who will, at arm's length from the government, in spite of any phone calls that may be going on with polling firms or whatever —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: The bottom line is the commission will make the decisions based on data, on what are the best services and closing of gaps in services and what's in the best interests of the patients of your community.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training. I'd like to send a copy over to the minister of a letter that was sent to his colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. This was sent by one of Ms Ecker's constituents, Mr Paul Rouen, an owner of a tool and mould company which currently employs five apprentices.

Mr Rouen is concerned with information he's received that all provincial government funding for in-school training of apprentices will disappear by 1999. Would the minister tell us if there is to be a decrease in funding for the in-school portion of apprenticeship programs as part of his cuts to community colleges? If this is the case, are the employers going to have to pick up the full cost of apprenticeship programs? If this is the case, it will jeopardize the apprenticeship programs that this government says it wants young people to obtain.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): As the honourable member opposite knows, we are reviewing the apprenticeship programs, making sure we streamline those and update them and modernize them. Some of the apprenticeship programs in Ontario haven't been observed over the last 30 years or so, so there's some updating necessary.

We have not concluded that review at this point. We announced some changes in the training system last year which will make the training, I think, more relevant to the needs of people in Ontario, and we'll continue to look at that.

Mr Wildman: I don't think Mr Rouen or anyone would be concerned about or opposed to a review of apprenticeship programs. The question is the funding.

This government says that the province is open for business. This government says that we need to prepare our youth for the world of work. This government says it's concerned about industry's need for skilled employees. If this is the case, can the minister assure us that when his review is complete, the funding that is ongoing will continue, the apprenticeships that Mr Rouen has been involved in as an employer will continue and that the government changes will not jeopardize apprenticeship programs for the young people Mr Rouen has employed up to now and intends to employ in the future?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the member opposite for the question. I don't think there's anyone in this chamber who is more aware of the importance of our apprenticeship programs than I am. I've been very closely involved in apprenticeship programs over the whole course of my life. I understand their importance, and I certainly understand their importance to industry and to people.

I can assure the member opposite that we continue to look at how to improve our training programs in Ontario, because they are important to the future of Ontario. They're important to our economic viability and, more important, they're critically important to the progress of people who work on factory floors and on shop floors across this province. I have great empathy for those people. I have some great understanding of what apprenticeship programs mean to them.

As we examine this we will make sure that our apprenticeship programs are up to the best standards in the world and we will continue to support them financially and legislatively. That's the intention of this government.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It seems that since the auditor's report was tabled, there's been some confusion about what the auditor's recommendations were for the ministry. Some understood that the auditor was recommending further closure of ag offices and that he was critical of the cost of operating three agricultural colleges. I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs could set the record straight on these issues.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I thank the honourable member for Chatham-Kent for his question. Just as an aside, on Friday last week we had very good news for the Chatham area. The member for Essex-Kent was there. We turned the sod on a \$155-million ethanol plant, the best news that Chatham has had for a long time.

For the first time in many years the ministry and the minister were ahead of the Provincial Auditor.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can I get an answer, please?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We have amalgamated some agricultural offices. In the education system we have amalgamated the campuses under the University of Guelph, a centre of excellence in agricultural education. We are ahead of the game.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à améliorer la Loi sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): In accordance with consent of the House of Thursday last, we have a

deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act. Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1517 to 1522.

The Speaker: Order. Members take your seats, please. All those in favour, please rise one by one and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Ross, Lillian
Barrett, Toby	Harris, Michael D.	Saunderson, William
Bassett, Isabel	Hastings, John	Shea, Derwyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Sheehan, Frank
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Brown, Jim	Jackson, Cameron	Smith, Bruce
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, David	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Ron	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Eves, Ernie L.	Murdoch, Bill	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fisher, Barbara	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ford, Douglas B.	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	Palladini, Al	Young, Terence H.
Galt, Doug	Parker, John L.	
Grimmett, Bill	Preston, Peter	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaitre, Bernard	Miclash, Frank
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Morin, Gilles E.
Boyd, Marion	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Pouliot, Gilles
Caplan, Elinor	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Sergio, Mario
Cooke, David S.	Marchese, Rosario	Silipo, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Wildman, Bud
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	Wood, Len
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

PETITIONS

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations,

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition that has been signed by 5,152 people. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas everyone has the right to personal safety free from criminal harassment, and all employees have the right to a safe work environment free from workplace harassment; and

"Whereas sexual harassment is against the law and has rightfully been recognized in the province of Ontario as an occupational health and safety issue; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince was a victim of sexual harassment and Theresa's harasser did murder her at their place of employment and we do not want her death to have been in vain; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince's family, women's organizations and members of the workforce have been left with serious unanswered questions and fear that this type of violence could happen again; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince was murdered as a result of male violence against women and male violence against women is a societal issue,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services to launch an inquest into the shooting death of Theresa Vince by her supervisor at their workplace. We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that a special public inquiry follow the inquest.

"We make this petition in memory of Theresa Vince of Chatham, Ontario, for all women and for all employees in every occupation."

Mr Speaker, an inquest has been called into this death but the petition calls additionally for a special public inquiry into this, so I —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You're in the debate of a petition and you can only read them.

1530

STUDENT/SENIOR APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): I'm proud to rise in the House today to bring this petition on behalf of the students of four high schools in my riding: Cayuga Secondary School, Hagersville Secondary School, Dunnville Secondary School, and McKinnon Park Secondary School in Caledonia. I've worked in cooperation with these students and their councils to declare October 21 to 27 as Student/Senior Appreciation Week in our riding of Brant-Haldimand. They have asked that I present this petition to the House, which reads as follows —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): As a point of order, you can't speak or debate petitions; you may only read them. So if you could go ahead, please.

Mr Preston: Here it comes, Mr Speaker. We're ready. This is a good-news petition for everybody:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, have worked in cooperation with our MPP, Peter Preston, to declare October 21 through 27 as Student/Senior Appreciation Week for Brant-Haldimand; and

"Whereas we will be helping seniors prepare their homes while proving to our communities that the great majority of students are not apathetic, negative and uncaring; and

"Whereas we further believe that this spirit of cooperation and community pride should be extended to the entire province to foster better communication between seniors and young people;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly to hereby declare the" third week of October "as Student/Senior Appreciation Week for the province of Ontario."

I am pleased to affix my name to this petition as well.

The student presidents of these schools are present here today: Richard Gee, Adam Schweyer, Brian Metcalfe and Adrien Gagnon.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that's been signed by 5,485 people across the province:

Whereas all employees have the right to a safe work environment, free from workplace harassment and violence; and

"Whereas sexual harassment has rightfully been recognized in the province of Ontario as an occupational health and safety issue; and

"Whereas workplace harassment is harmful to the health and wellbeing of employees and to their employers; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince was a victim of workplace harassment and Theresa's harasser did murder her at their place of employment, and we do not want her death to have been in vain; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince's family, women's organizations and members of the workforce have been left with serious, unanswered questions and fear that this type of violence could happen again;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund a special committee comprised of grass-roots women's organizations, labour, feminist lawyers, employers, diverse communities reflective of the province of Ontario, parliamentarians. The mandate of the special committee would be to develop recommendations and guidelines that would assist all employers in creating a safe work environment that prevents workplace harassment and violence and ensures a thorough and objective investigation of harassment complaints when circumstances require.

"We make this petition in memory of Theresa Vince of Chatham, Ontario, and for all employees in every occupation."

I am honoured to affix my signature.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I am pleased to present a petition from the good people of Port Colborne concerning drivers' exams for senior citizens.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the city of Welland is slated to close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Port Colborne and Wainfleet senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister

of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences for seniors,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Port Colborne and Wainfleet and that recognizes that when tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest places to assess driver ability."

I proudly affix my signature.

KAKABEKA FALLS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by hundreds of rural residents of my riding who are very concerned about the imposition of parking fees at Kakabeka Falls, more popularly known as the Niagara of the north. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is applying a parking fee for visitors to Kakabeka Falls, a significant and unique tourist attraction in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the application of this fee will have a negative effect on tourism to this site, which will have further negative spinoffs on the local economy,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow the application of this fee."

I am proud to sign my signature to it.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): These petitions come from the Ontario Omnibus Alliance and there are approximately 10,000 names here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the registered voters of the province of Ontario, expect the government we elect to lead our Legislature in a responsible and competent manner; and

"Whereas we expect the government we elect to be the government of all the people and to consult with the opposition and to respect the mandate given the government by the electorate; and

"Whereas the present government, led by Premier Mike Harris, (1) has forced the passage of important legislation without adequate preparation, consultation and debate, and (2) has exceeded the mandate given the government by the electorate, and (3) has passed legislation, including Bill 26, that increases the power of the government to unduly intrude into the lives of the people and contradicts the values that define us as a compassionate, inclusive and just society, and (4) has caused us to become more divided at a time when we should be overlooking our differences and coming together to find new ways of protecting, not nurturing those values to which we all aspire; and

"Whereas we, the registered voters of the province of Ontario, for the reasons given above have lost all confidence in the leadership of Mike Harris,

"Then be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of the province of Ontario to remove Mike Harris from the position of Premier by whatever legal means, including his voluntary resignation, and to replace him at the earliest possible moment with a

competent and responsive member of the provincial Parliament."

I sign this petition.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada; and

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I signed this.

1540

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the government of Ontario signed by citizens from Sudbury and Chelmsford.

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across the province will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since the Premier, Mike Harris, and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here from some 150 people who signed this petition at a demonstration against Mike Harris last Thursday in Timmins, and it reads as follows:

"To Premier Mike Harris, Minister Elizabeth Witmer and members of the government:

"Whereas Mike Harris and his Conservative government have already dismantled the Workplace Health and Safety Agency;

"Whereas Cam Jackson's report when implemented will create an unhealthy and unsafe province in which to work;

"Whereas the government is creating a false impression as to the WCB financial status;

"Whereas the decrease in compensation entitlement to injured workers will only create artificial reductions of claims;

"Whereas all of the proposed changes are solely for the benefit of the employer and do nothing to promote harmony in resolving health and safety issues in the workplace;

"Whereas the government has only one concern, to fund a tax cut and a grab for their wealthy friends;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government to halt the attack on workers of this province and the right to a safe and healthy workplace."

I affix my signature to that petition.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I rise again on the topic of driver exams for seniors, this time signed by seniors from the greater Fort Erie area like Laura Hodges of Fort Erie and Mavis Martin of Crystal Beach.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the town of Fort Erie has been closed as of September 24 and the centre in Niagara Falls will be closed later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Fort Erie senior citizens to drive all the way over an hour to the municipality of St Catharines and take their tests on unfamiliar roads;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Fort Erie and that recognizes that, when road tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest place to assess driver ability."

I add my signature to the petition.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It is my understanding that the government is intending to call for consideration this afternoon the bill dealing with video lottery terminals and other matters related to that —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's in order.

Mr Bradley: — which is in order if they wish to do so. What I wish to ask you about is what your view would be or if you could be of any assistance to us for a couple of reasons, the first being that the government has dilly-dallied all day and has not really given us adequate notice of this. The government, when we arrived today, was going to be dealing with the bill dealing with redistribution, and then there was some talk about the bill dealing with environmental assessment and, latterly, this.

The Speaker: Move on to the second one. I think —

Mr Bradley: I want you to rule on that if you may.

The second point I think is equally valid is that if the government is proceeding with this, it is proceeding without providing members with the full amount of information they should have. In other words, they have withheld a very important government report on criminal activity in gambling, which would be essential for members of this assembly to have before dealing with this matter. If we don't have at least some form of that report before us, and I understand it's a sensitive report, I don't believe this House should be dealing with that matter this afternoon. I ask for your intervention to assist us in opposition with these two matters I've raised.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On the point of order, Mr Speaker: To follow from the request of the House leader for the official opposition, as members know and as you know, Speaker, the report to which Mr Bradley referred has been a subject of some discussion and debate in question period in this House. It appears that the legislative committee that was responsible for looking at Bill 75 on clause-by-clause requested this report and was denied access to it.

It appears now that the Solicitor General has indeed had information about this report. He has indicated in the House that it is sensitive. It certainly would be within the parameters of good sense to provide that report with sensitive information like names and dates and places blacked out. But it is central to the debate on Bill 75. It is central to determining how members should vote, members on all sides of the House, on third reading on this legislation.

I would request you to consider very seriously the remarks of my friend the member for St Catharines with regard to the need for members to have access to this police intelligence report that indicates, apparently, that the legalization of video lottery terminals will not in fact cut down on illegal activities in gaming but will simply complement that activity, which is central to the issue. The government has said it wishes to legalize these machines because it will help to stamp out illegal activity. Now we appear to have a police report that disputes that. It's important that all members have access to this report before voting on third reading.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): On the same point, Mr Speaker, I am a member of the standing committee on administration of justice of this House. As I think you're aware, this summer when we were in committee and were in public hearings, hearing concerns about this bill across the province, trying to gather up all the information that we wished to have to make a proper decision, we asked the clerk of our committee to write the ministry because we had heard that this report was

there. We were told that because of the sensitive and confidential law enforcement information that was in it, they could not reveal this to us.

At the same time, there was a sanitized version of this report that the minister had for public consumption — it was in his briefing notes and I have, actually, a new version of it, the version 1 here, in my possession — that has expunged all the names that obviously would be sensitive, and I don't want to know those names either. But the basic principles of the introduction of legal video slot machines in Ontario, it said here in this police report, would not get rid of the problem that the government said it would.

What has happened for our committee is that we are being forced in committee and now in this House to start to make decisions on behalf of the people of Ontario when we don't have the full information. In fact, the government suppressed this from us so that we wouldn't have this, because of course it does not make the government's case. That's why we are asking for a delay.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): On the same point, Mr Speaker, and I hope to be able to do this once at this point and not have to do it again, because I know you're going to be tested today with many points of order — this is what the game is about, obviously, this afternoon, to raise points of order.

Interjection: It is not.

Hon David Johnson: If not, I apologize.

In terms of the order today, we had hoped to make an arrangement with the other two parties on Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act, and indeed this was discussed in the House leaders' meeting last Thursday. However, over the course of the following afternoon and Friday — late Friday afternoon we still hadn't reached an agreement. This morning we took one last go at it to see if we could reach an agreement and were unable to do it.

I believe there was a suggestion by the official opposition that the environmental bill be discussed this afternoon, but the critic for the third party is not here, and consequently it couldn't be discussed.

1550

It is our intention to call Bill 75. In terms of the report which is being alluded to here today, of course that report, which was created by the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, CISO, as it's known, was not created by this government. It has been the topic of many questions during question period. All of those questions have been addressed satisfactorily. The matter continues to be raised here this afternoon in terms of preventing a very valid opportunity for this House to entertain Bill 75 at this time. I hope that you would rule, Mr Speaker, and I believe that you will rule indeed at the appropriate time — we haven't even called for its introduction yet, but once we're able to get there — that this certainly would be in order.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, further to that, there's information you may find useful.

The Speaker: Quickly then, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: It's my understanding that the New Democratic Party is prepared to deal with the environ-

mental bill. We've both expressed some agreement to deal with a bill that —

The Speaker: Order. Of the two points of order raised, the first point, with respect to determining which bill would be debated today, really is of such a minor consequence that it matters not. It's up to the House leaders to decide what they deal with. Ultimately, at the end of the day, it's the government House leader who calls the orders of the day and he has to give you as much notice or as little notice as he can give you. It isn't even a decent point of order.

With respect to the report, the difficulty you place the Speaker in today, and any Speaker you request reports of, is that there are thousands of reports done by governments and agencies, boards and commissions of those governments. All kinds of these reports will have varying impact on legislation that comes before this House. The dilemma in asking the Speaker to delay, impede, slow down or not deal with legislation because a report isn't before the House or members of this House can't get a copy of that report is that you could endlessly be requesting that very same thing on any piece of legislation that comes before the House. All I can do, as a subject of all the members of this place, is ensure that the government, when introducing bills, providing the legislation and packaging it up and delivering it, lives by the rules we've established. The government hasn't broken any rules.

I appreciate the fact that it may frustrate the opposition, and that it may frustrate them in great order, but the fact of the matter is that the government House leader has lived by the rules set down by all the parties and there is absolutely nothing out of order. If you start asking me to provide members of this Legislature with copies of reports that impact pieces of legislation, we could be here forever simply getting reports. Although I appreciate the concerns listed, it would be untenable for the Speaker if they started suggesting that certain members would be provided with certain reports before decisions could be carried on.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise on a point of order under the standing orders, section 107, which reads:

"(a) Standing and select committees shall be severally empowered to examine, inquire into and report from time to time on all such matters as may be referred to them by the House.

"(b) Except when the House otherwise orders, each committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and things.

"(c) A standing or select committee to which a bill has been referred by the House shall be empowered to report the same with or without amendments or to report that the bill be not reported."

I'm asking that you rule specifically on section 107(b), "Except when the House otherwise orders, each committee shall have the power to send for persons, papers and things." I'm asking that you review Hansard for the standing committee on administration of justice where we asked for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial

Relations to appear after there was a change in ministers, we asked for papers to be presented to the committee and we weren't given the cooperation of the government to make that request.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Essex South, I appreciate what you're driving at. The difficulty is — and I made this ruling not long ago when the member for Dovercourt came forward with respect to a committee Chair's decision — that is something you have to take up with the committee. It speaks very directly in there about committees having those rights and privileges. Those rights and privileges are protected by committee Chair. I, as Speaker, cannot start determining whether committee Chairs' rulings are reasonable and acceptable. It would put committee Chairs in untenable situations. Those are the standing orders as they sit and, frankly, I can't get involved with committees and what they say. I gave the exact same ruling last week to the member for Dovercourt.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALCOHOL, GAMING AND CHARITY FUNDING PUBLIC INTEREST ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 RÉGISSANT LES ALCOOLS, LES JEUX ET LE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE DANS L'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Mr Tsubouchi moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to liquor and gaming / *Projet de loi 75, Loi réglementant les alcools et les jeux dans l'intérêt public, prévoyant le financement des organismes de bienfaisance grâce à la gestion responsable des loteries vidéo et modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait aux alcools et aux jeux.*

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 75, the Alcohol, Gaming and Charity Funding Public Interest Act.

First of all, I want to deeply thank my parliamentary assistant, the member for Durham Centre, Jim Flaherty, for his excellent work throughout the public hearing process and in clause-by-clause debate. I believe his attention to detail and his overall comprehension of the government's initiatives made for a very informative and useful discussion. I appreciate his leadership in this regard.

At the same time I want to thank all members of the standing committee on administration of justice for their contribution to the debate. I believe this was an opportunity for all members to express their views on these important matters.

Finally, but not least, I want to particularly thank and congratulate those members of the public and various representatives of organizations who appeared before the standing committee for their interest, for their contribu-

tion and for their advice. I know I express on behalf of all members our sincere appreciation for their participation in our deliberations regarding Bill 75.

Members of the House will be interested to know that during the public hearings held across the province between October 6 and October 20 by the standing committee on administration of justice, more than 150 organizations and individual presenters put forward their views and comments. Many of the presentations from the hospitality sector, the racing industry, the gaming sector and the business community in general indicated substantial support for the government's gaming initiatives.

To be fair, there were some concerns raised, particularly in two areas: enforcement measures and problem gambling. In this regard, let me assure the members that we have given and continue to give a high priority to a careful and controlled implementation strategy which includes an emphasis on enforcement of gaming and liquor laws in the province of Ontario.

As members know, Bill 75 will bring about the merger of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario, the Gaming Control Commission of Ontario and some regulatory functions of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. From this merger will come a new organization, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. This new organization will be a schedule 1 agency that will be able to focus more attention on enforcement measures relating to the gaming and beverage alcohol laws in the province of Ontario. This will allow us to better monitor the development of issues in both liquor and gaming regulations and respond more effectively to changes in the marketplace. As an example, the role of the current Gaming Control Commission will be expanded considerably in the new organization.

Bill 75 amends the Gaming Control Act to require that all suppliers and participants in the gaming marketplace register with the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, and now will include suppliers of either goods or services for video lotteries. This will include the following: registering the owners of the premises where video lotteries will be situated; registering manufacturers and distributors of video lotteries; registering individuals and companies which service video lotteries; establishing the type of games permitted, rules of play and betting limits; and setting internal control standards on the handling and recording of the moneys.

Before any registrations are issued, background investigations of individuals and companies will be conducted to ensure that they satisfy the highest standards of honesty, integrity and financial responsibility.

The present Gaming Control Commission was set up in 1994 by the previous government and I have no hesitation in saying that in its short lifespan it has emerged as one of the better gaming regulatory commissions in North America.

We have made significant strides in addressing some very old problems, from who is allowed in the business to how the participants conduct themselves. In 1993, prior to the setting up of the Gaming Control Commission, only three charges were laid by what was known at the time as the ministry's entertainment standards branch. In the last 12 months, because of the new Gaming Control

Commission, there have been over 300 charges laid, so we have been much more active and considerably more vigorous in pursuing the so-called bad guys.

1600

Members may be interested to know that prior to the establishment of the Gaming Control Commission there were no restrictions on who could provide goods and services to charities involved in gaming. Today we have something in the order of 20,000 registrants and we have the tools and ability to kick out those who fail to meet those standards of honesty and integrity. We take the job of enforcement very seriously.

As of October 1, 1996, more stringent standards have been set regarding internal controls, the tracking of paper and clear audit requirements with which commercial bingo halls must comply. In addition, on the same date, more rigorous and rigid standards were put in place regarding internal controls, ticket manufacture and requirements in the tracking of break-open tickets from the manufacturer to the retail level for all tickets sold in the province. The tickets are routinely subjected to testing at the Centre of Forensic Sciences to ensure security and integrity of the product.

Yet we want to do more to ensure enforcement and security in the gaming marketplace. We believe that our restructuring into the new commission will make our enforcement measures more effective and better ensure the honesty and integrity of both suppliers and participants in the gaming marketplace. We have approximately 80 enforcement officers on staff, including both civilian and Ontario Provincial Police personnel, and a strong cooperative relationship with the various police forces in Ontario. The combination of the Gaming Control Commission and the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario will increase this complement by additional officers.

As we begin to implement this legislation, we will seek additional resources to strengthen enforcement, as we have done with Casino Windsor and Casino Rama. Our enforcement team has a very good working association with the various police forces in Ontario, a strong cooperative effort to ensure integrity in the gaming marketplace and to confront illegal gambling in the province.

In connection with problem gambling, the government is committed to provide 2%, which is up to \$9 million, of video lottery revenues for initiatives in this area. Current research indicates that less than 1% of gamblers are affected by problem gambling. According to the Addiction Research Foundation, there is at the present time no credible research available to support the suggestion that video lotteries are any more addictive than any other kind of gambling. The Minister of Health is working with other ministries and community agencies to develop a program aimed at prevention, research and treatment for problem gambling. At the present time, the Ministry of Health provides about \$1 million annually for province-wide research, prevention and treatment services. It is our plan to increase this by 900%, or approximately \$9 million annually, once our initiatives are up and running.

At the same time, Bill 75 provides for an amendment to the Liquor Licence Act that will allow the revocation or suspension of a liquor licence when the licence holder

or employee allows a person under the age of 19 years to play video lotteries or to be in areas where there are video lotteries. A companion amendment to the Ontario Lottery Corporation Act will also reinforce restricted access to areas designated for video lottery play and will prohibit play by persons under the age of 19 as well.

Ontario's gaming marketplace is complex and involves a number of distinct yet interrelated areas of activity: provincial lotteries, horse racing, charitable gaming and casinos. The market's numerous participants include the Ontario Lottery Corp, the Ontario Casino Corp, the horse racing industry, thousands of charitable organizations and hundreds of commercial suppliers and operators. Ontario is one of the largest gaming jurisdictions in North America. Although figures are difficult to confirm, it is believed that close to \$10 billion annually is wagered in all forms of legal gaming activities.

Charitable gaming activity in Ontario normally includes bingo, break-open tickets, raffle lotteries and Monte Carlo events. This form of activity has become an increasingly important revenue stream for thousands of charities across Ontario. As other forms of support eroded, more and more groups turned to gaming to generate the funds required to maintain their programs and their services. Close to one half of Ontario's charities conduct some form of charitable gaming activity. It is estimated that gross spending on charitable gaming is approximately \$2 billion a year. It is also estimated that Ontario charities benefit from close to \$300 million in gaming profits on an annual basis.

Ontario's gaming marketplace has expanded and evolved dramatically over the course of the last several years. Some of the more substantive changes include the following: a shift from low- to higher-stakes bingo; an increasing interest and dependence on the part of charitable organizations in the Monte Carlo events — charitable organizations received \$12 million net annual from about 4,200 Monte Carlo events held in the province last year; the increased participation of commercial operators and suppliers in the charitable gaming events; and the introduction of commercial casinos.

Without wanting to sound critical, previous Liberal and NDP governments have been responsible over the last decade for many new initiatives which have expanded the gaming marketplace in Ontario. These previous governments increased the betting maximum for Monte Carlo games to \$10, made provision for three-day roving Monte Carlo events, of which there were 4,200 in Ontario last year — not to mention the introduction of the first commercial casino in Windsor and the establishment of Casino Rama in Orillia. None the less, as the Minister of Finance said in his May 7 budget statement, "VLTs, if implemented within tight regulatory controls and in limited-access environments, can meet a legitimate entertainment demand and provide a significant stimulus to the hospitality industry."

Let me conclude my remarks by highlighting the main elements relating to Bill 75. As a result of the initiatives in the May 7 budget connected to video lotteries and the introduction of charity gaming halls, we believe these programs will stimulate economic activity and create new job opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry

and provide more secure funding for community charities. The merging of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario and the Gaming Control Commission into the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, along with amendments to the Liquor Licence Act, is designed to ensure that the new organization will more clearly be able to focus on the enforcement measures relating to gaming and beverage alcohol laws in the province of Ontario.

This legislation, Bill 75, will bring some much-needed discipline and control to Ontario's gaming marketplace as a whole. Two per cent, or approximately \$9 million, of video lottery gross revenues will be set aside to establish a comprehensive problem gambling strategy, which will include public awareness and prevention campaigns, treatment and research components. Ontario is the ninth province to allow the operation of video lotteries and will have fewer video lotteries on a per capita basis than any other province. As well, many other provinces, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Nova Scotia, have all sought efficiencies through amalgamating their liquor boards and other regulatory bodies.

I urge all members to support these initiatives, which will help stabilize funding for our community charities and assist our hospitality and tourism sectors and the horse racing industry to compete and grow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments or questions?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to advise particularly the people of Ontario who may be watching this that you have now received the sanitized version of why these insidious machines should be introduced to the province of Ontario.

We've asked the minister over the last couple of weeks if he personally approves them, and I give him credit for saying he no longer has personal opinions, he has policy. That leads me to believe that personally he doesn't like them but the government has said, "We have to have them."

There's going to be some money available, as the minister said, once these machines are installed. I don't know how long that's going to take because they haven't told us how long it will take. There are going to be some gamblers out there who will become addicted well before the minister so graciously gives any of the funds in order to prevent addiction. We want the funds to prevent addiction, not only to try and treat it after.

They're going to register owners, they're going to register manufacturers, they're going to register those who provide service; they're going to make rules and they're going to have standards for handling money. That's all great for those who, under normal circumstances, wouldn't treat these machines any other way but than in an aboveboard way.

But we know, because police services have told us and the public has told us, that they're concerned that the introduction of video lottery terminals in every corner of our communities is not wanted because of what they're going to do to society. I ask this government to use your conscience, not worry about your pocketbook.

1610

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I listened with interest to the comments made by the minister. What I

noticed was lacking in terms of his comments to the House was a reference, which I thought should have been there, to a most important report that this House and the public have become aware of in the last two weeks, which I would have thought would halt the government in its tracks in terms of its introduction of this bill and its introducing of these slot machines right across every community in this province.

It's become very clear during the course of the questions in this House that neither the Solicitor General nor the minister responsible for carriage of this bill seem to know anything about this terribly important report done by police services in the province, which have expressed very serious concerns with the link between organized crime and video slot machines.

I would have thought that the government, becoming aware of this report and becoming aware of the very serious concerns that have been raised by legitimate police forces in this province, would have done its utmost, first of all, to try to get a copy to the committee responsible for dealing with this issue — the sections involving people who might be prosecuted might have their names blacked out, but a copy — so the committee could have done its legitimate work in determining the nature and the length and the breadth of the infiltration of organized crime.

I say to the minister, do you really need the money that badly, that you would completely ignore this report put before you by police services which expresses such serious concerns? Do you need the money that badly, or shouldn't you stop right now and not proceed any further?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I thank the minister for his introduction to the debate on third reading of Bill 75. In terms of consultation, it's important for the members here and for those voters watching to know that there was extensive consultation, not only in Toronto but also in Sarnia, in Fort Erie, in Thunder Bay, in Kenora, in Sudbury and in Ottawa. The standing committee on the administration of justice travelled around the province and we heard from concerned persons, particularly from persons in the hospitality industry in Ontario, particularly in the north and the northwest of Ontario, who are very concerned about not being in a position to compete with the neighbouring provinces.

Both provinces that border Ontario — Manitoba and Quebec — have legal video lottery machines. They have brought them in to combat the problem of these illegal machines, where the money is going to sources that certainly are not government sources and are not sources that create revenue for the taxpayers of Ontario.

There are eight other provinces in Canada that have legalized video lotteries, and I think it's fair to say that the majority of people in Ontario and the majority of the people who appeared before the committee took a mature view with respect to gaming in the province; that is, they view it as a form of entertainment. Viewing it as a form of entertainment, as they do in eight other provinces, they at the same time expressed concern that the government introduce video lotteries in a controlled, phased manner, which is precisely what Bill 75 prescribes.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is indeed important to respond to the minister's statement, as the minister's statement is sadly lacking in most of the essential information the public needs to assess this bill, information that was brought forward at the consultation that Mr Flaherty has told us about but not completely told us about, because many, many of the people we heard from told us about the problems with addictive gambling connected to this particular form of gambling, which has been introduced not as an extension of previous gambling but as a brand-new initiative. This is a Harris Conservative government brand-new initiative to put gambling in people's neighbourhoods, and we have not heard one thing from that side of the House to tell us how they're going to deal with the brand-new effects this is going to put in the neighbourhoods, and the bill, as people will learn in the subsequent discussion, is silent on all the important things. In fact, all the promises that are being made about protecting the public are not in this bill. The minister, in raising them, is not quite telling us how this government will live up to any of the concerns and any of the responsibilities that we heard in every single one of the communities that we've been in.

We've heard about the impacts of gambling in other jurisdictions. We've heard about how they've created addiction rates in Manitoba; about how there have been problems and how they have been banned from 45 states; about how BC took on the issue of VLTs, these video slot machines, or what the police call them, which is video gambling machines, and said no; about how this contradicts municipalities, some 50 of them that have written to this government and said, "We don't want these machines in our neighbourhoods," and have asked, "Why now, if you promised a referendum when you were in opposition, won't you have a referendum to see if people really want these machines in their neighbourhoods?" This is a government that has flip-flopped on itself completely in the pursuit of money. We really resent that the minister is not able to tell us the salient answers to these questions when introducing this bill, which is starting to be of great interest to the public.

The Acting Speaker: The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, if I might perhaps clarify the subject of my opinion and policies with respect to this matter, if charities can benefit out of this legislation, which they will — because prior to this, the roving casinos are hugely unregulated in their manner, and in fact that's the biggest problem that charities have with them. They really don't see the benefits of participating in these gaming initiatives. Secondly, if jobs can be created or protected in the racing industry, where there are over 40,000 full-time jobs that are affected by this, and certainly in the hospitality and tourism trade, then yes, I am in favour of this.

Dealing with the deliberations, if I might refer to the member for Sudbury East's comments with respect to the deliberations we're having now, I might remind them of the deliberations around the Windsor casino at that time.

Ms Martel: Remember, we didn't do VLTs because we were worried about the same issues.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly the member is unhappy with this, but I might refer her to a statement that was made by the then leader, the Premier at the time. Mr Rae at that time, and this was in the Toronto Star back on October 6, 1992, defended casino gambling by saying: "I don't think it's a big deal. We've had gaming in the province in a variety of ways — bingo, horse racing and the lotteries — so to argue that games of chance are somehow some dramatic, novel thing would be quite false." That's the Premier of the time explaining his deliberations dealing with the casino, which at the time was certainly the biggest new initiative in the gaming industry in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kennedy: I'd like to ask the unanimous consent of the House to divide the debate time with the member for Essex South.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? There is agreement.

Mr Kennedy: The introduction of Bill 75, which is called An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to liquor and gaming, makes it sound almost benign, almost a nice thing: funding charities. It could be one of the first useful things this government could do, except that this government instead is guilty again of putting a label on something that's completely different. This is like a friendly stuffed bear tag being put on a wild animal, because this bill has no protections and in fact does harm to charities in this province and damages the ability of charities to deliver services in the communities where they exist right now.

1620

What this government did not have until the first day of hearings — the then and now former minister agreed to admit that this is about money. Ninety per cent of the money that's being collected is going to be kept by this government, which needs it. This government is giving only 10% of the money to the restaurants and bars, maybe 10% to the charities; 80% of it is staying with the government, a higher take than anywhere that these machines are used. It's very, very clear what it reveals. It reveals a government that has become greedy for gambling money, a government that is unconcerned. The reason there has been no success on the government side in responding to concerns is because it has superseded them by its need for money.

The people out there trying to make sense of why this government, with Bill 75, would enter into this new form of gambling, a hard form of gambling that has proven to have problems in terms of the disruption it creates in the community, can only come to the same conclusion: It's about the money.

There's only one basis on which this government would throw away the statements that the minister of the treasury made last year, that he wouldn't have more gambling; that the Premier made when he was the leader of the third party, that he didn't want to have more revenue coming in from gambling. Instead, in a complete turnaround that isn't to be found in the Comic Book Revolution — you can't find this in that little booklet —

instead, this government has subsequently decided it's so greedy for the money that it has to do this.

When we look at the problems they left uncovered, we realize that the title of this bill should be: an act to deregulate liquor and gambling despite the public interest, to fund the government's 30% tax cut through the mismanagement of video lottery terminals and to amend certain statutes related to gambling recklessly.

Bill 75 is a sign of the economic desperation of this Comic Book Revolution, which is going to make our province less safe, less comfortable and a more divided place than ever before. It's a symbol for the Harris government: This is a machine that employs nobody, that produces nothing and preys on vulnerable people.

It is a bill that will double gambling in this province, and not just double it but double it recklessly, and create new social and economic problems for everyone who lives in this province whether they are directly involved in gambling or not. That is the truth about Bill 75 that this government doesn't have the gumption to admit.

Charities are not going to benefit from Bill 75. In fact, in the hearings which Mr Flaherty attended, organization after organization stood in front of the justice committee and said to stop the foolishness and put an end to the government's proposal to introduce these video gambling machines. They know what's been proven to happen in other provinces: that they will see a significant reduction in revenues because these new machines are actually going to confiscate the revenue they currently have from bingos and break-open tickets.

The public interest: When we talk about how this government even has a notion of the public interest, how it can be served by the infiltration, the placement, of slot machines into various neighbourhood bars and restaurants, there's not one thing we hear from the other side of the House that tells us how that suddenly magically became part of the public interest when the Treasurer found out his numbers didn't add up.

The chief of police of the London police service, Julian Fantino, who is also the chairman of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, has said unequivocally that the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario is not in favour of video lottery terminals.

Mr Flaherty laughs because this is not a concern for this government. It is not a concern that the person in charge of the coordinating service dealing with organized crime in this province says, "Don't do video lottery terminals" and advised this government of that as early as August. We introduced that letter in August to the committee. Staff inspector Paul Gottschalk, who has the responsibility to clean up after this new mess that this government wants to bring in, this new mess that is brand-new with this government — this is a Mike Harris government mess that is coming in and it's only going to be cleaned up by the police. Staff inspector Paul Gottschalk and staff sergeant Larry Moodie of the OPP's illegal gaming commission have expressed significant reservations about the introduction of these video gambling machines into Ontario.

How come, when the police are saying that video gambling machines are a bad thing — that they bring in organized crime; that they'll increase the number of

illegal gaming machines in this province; that indeed they're doing the opposite of what this government tried to have us believe it was pretending to do all the while, when it's simply about bringing more money in; that in fact having legal machines makes it harder to spot which ones are illegal — how the heck can these people argue even for a second, let alone label a bill, that it's in the public interest in terms of Bill 75?

The members of this government have shown us one thing conclusively through the course of the hearings and the coverup that's happened in this House: that they're addicted to gambling revenue. They can't get away from it. The idea of taking money from people in this form is something this government can't get away from. Its reckless promise of a 30% tax cut, without any consideration for how that could be done under these fiscal conditions, without any forethought whatsoever, is why this government now has to mainline gambling in this province, has to retain that addiction.

The government is going to introduce slot machines in each of the members opposite's neighbourhoods — I'm sure they're going to be there — which bring in, in Alberta, \$50,000 for the government per machine. That's \$50,000 times 20,000 video gambling machines. That's \$50,000 coming out of the local economy that could be spent in and stay in the neighbourhood, but instead it needs to feed this tax cut.

The members opposite know the truth. The members opposite know this will harm their communities. But these members know also that Bill 75 —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There's too much yelling back and forth. I suggest that there is time for debate for all parties and that you use that time when it's your turn.

Mr Kennedy: The agitation on the other side of the House is well understood, given the seriousness of the dereliction of duty from what they were expected to do. They did not tell their constituents that they would be bringing in video gambling when they got elected last time. This is a brand-new twist of the Comic Book Revolution, because the numbers don't add up.

This government is ignoring the advice of all the experts we heard that Bill 75 will change the social fabric of this province. It will put hard gambling into local neighbourhoods, thereby increasing addiction, petty crime and family breakdown. Gambling in this province will become even more chaotic than it already is.

The arrogance of this government, to not even take any of that responsibility. People who look at this bill and try to find any semblance of taking responsibility will be sadly disappointed. In fact, this government has proven itself so disinterested in the ill effects of video slot machines that it couldn't even be bothered to read a report prepared by the Ontario Provincial Police, Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, that says, "The government has presented organized-crime groups with the vehicle for them to carry on with the job they know best." It is the height of irresponsibility for this government to proceed with this bill.

Let's not just talk about illegal gambling. Let's look also at the kind of so-called legal gambling that this government wants to introduce. The report, as described

in the *Globe and Mail*, goes on to say that illegal gambling is used to raise money and legal gambling is used to launder money. The *Globe and Mail* reporter writes, "The report throws cold water on claims" that we heard again moments ago from the Premier and the minister, on the claims by this government "that the way to deal with 25,000 illegal gambling machines...is to make video lottery terminals legal."

That isn't in fact a possibility. Our own police services have told this government that, and the only response we get is that either it doesn't care enough to read the report or isn't smart enough to figure it out when they read it. Then, I guess, we're to believe from this government that if it did know about that, it's covering it up in the public interest.

Detective Sergeant Dave Homenuck, who wrote the police report, says: "Legal gambling has never replaced illegal gambling; in fact, it complements it. Experts indicate that the introduction of new legal games brings in new players, a significant number of whom yield to the lure of illegal gambling to satisfy their interest."

1630

On the first day of the committee hearings into Bill 75 the then Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Norm Sterling, was asked if his ministry had any input, any studies about the impact of crime as the result of the introduction of video lottery terminals. He was asked as well whether his government had consulted with the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Provincial Police or any other police sources in Ontario about their feedback on video gambling machines. I'm going to read you the minister's response, because it's a study in how this government has tried to dodge any responsibility for that part of this issue. The minister said:

"I personally have not had discussions, but the Gaming Control Commission, which is part of the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission, is in constant touch with the OPP, with all the police forces in the province of Ontario. They know what each is doing about it. In fact, the gaming commission is largely staffed by former OPP officers in terms of their operation in Windsor and in terms of a lot of their people who are involved at Rama. I suspect they would be very involved as well with regard to this. There is a very, very close tie between the Gaming Control Commission and the police forces in this province." He then reiterated his point that "the gaming commission is quite aware of the risks associated with this because it's in constant contact with the other jurisdictions."

This government said they were surprised that there was a report on gambling. They knew all along. This government has been involved in a coverup of the report at some levels and ignorance of it in others, but they have chosen not to bring forward that information which truly is in the public interest. Instead they have, as we've seen in issue after issue, sloughed it off to an unelected commission to look after the public interest. We don't find any safeguards resulting in the legislation because this government has shown no interest.

The Solicitor General certainly must have known about the report. He's admitted that now in the House in terms

of the briefing note. The minister knew, in the sense that he avoided the question, and it's likely the Premier knew. It seems like everybody knew what they wouldn't tell the standing committee that had been assigned the task of reviewing Bill 75 to look after the public interest. That's when the government decided that it no longer knew about this report.

For the government to withhold that pertinent information from the committee, especially when they'd been asked to provide it, is not just negligent, it's disgraceful. Given what this government has in mind for the people of Ontario, it's a really sad day for this province to think, that a government, with undue haste because of its fiscal desperation, its willingness to put money ahead of its responsibilities, is going to introduce a minimum — we recognize too that when we say a minimum of 20,000 machines, nowhere in the legislation is there any limit on this government; 20,000 is just the opening bid, the opening bet by this government in terms of how many machines it's going to stuff into bars and restaurants across this province.

It's going into your neighbourhood, ladies and gentlemen, and it's going to be in every neighbourhood across the province because there is no way to stop it once this bill has passed. It's happening without any consideration, not even an iota of consideration, for the consequences and with no studies at all of the social impacts of what things can happen because of it. All this is being done because the wealthiest Ontarians, in the judgement of this government, needed to have a tax cut. Well, congratulations, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sure your constituents are proud of you.

Then again Ernie Eves, the honourable member for Parry Sound and Minister of Finance, said in his budget speech that he was out to do several things. We heard from the minister back in May, before a lot of this information became known, when we had the Minister of Finance talk to us about his objectives to assist Ontario's hospitality industry, that we would see from the Ontario Lottery Corp "a limited number of video lottery terminals at selected locations across the province."

"In recent years," he said, "the gaming marketplace has expanded dramatically with new products which have made it difficult to control.... It is anticipated that the establishment of" — what he said at that time merits some attention from the members opposite — "a tightly regulated, government-managed" video gambling "network, along with other measures announced in this budget, will counter illegal gaming activity, and impose some much-needed discipline and control into Ontario's gaming marketplace. We believe that VLTs, if implemented within tight regulatory controls and in limited-access environments, can meet a legitimate entertainment demand and provide a significant stimulus to the hospitality industry."

To recap, the minister was talking about "a limited number of video lottery terminals at selected locations" to go up against illegal gambling and meet a legitimate entertainment demand. None of this proved to be true in the course of the hearings and the other revelations that have come out: 20,000 video gambling machines, we later learned, are what this government has in mind, the

largest number anywhere in the country. This government doesn't have any reference in the legislation, not one word, that says it will limit the number of video gambling machines. There is no cap on the number of machines we're going to see brought into this province.

Where is the mechanism for a tightly managed network of video gambling machines? It's not in Bill 75. There's not one reference to a tightly managed network in Bill 75. There's no mention of who's going to oversee the management of the gambling machines, who's going to purchase them, who's going to service them, what the criteria will be for choosing locations. Will they just go to the friends of the member opposite, and then perhaps those neighbourhoods will be most severely affected, perhaps justifiably? What will be the role and function of registered gaming suppliers? Who will choose and approve the choice of games? How will profits be divided between site holders and government? The list goes on of things this government has neglected to provide for, and in doing so does nothing to provide any level, let alone tight levels, of regulation for these machines. It's open season on hard gambling with the introduction of Bill 75.

They tell us nothing about it except that they're going to be introduced, and a nice concession from the government is that they'll be age-restricted. So we have the spectacle of the government, a year after cigarette machines were brought out of bars and restaurants because they couldn't be kept away from minors, bringing in gambling machines because suddenly they have the confidence that they can do the same with that. There's an extremely large gap between what this government says they may do, what they might do, what we ought to trust them to do and what's actually in the legislation. It's a gap that's as large as the credibility this government has now put on the line in terms of saying that this type of gambling is a benign form of entertainment.

There are 15,586 licensed establishments in Ontario and 33 liquor licence inspectors, and now they're also going to become gaming inspectors. Each licensed establishment is inspected, on average, once every five years. How is the new gaming commission possibly going to regulate 20,000 new video lottery terminals, video gambling machines?

Here in Metropolitan Toronto there are currently four officers dealing with all the problems of gambling. The officer in charge says that when you bring in these machines, he's going to need 100 officers to just have a start at regulating the new crime this government is bringing in along with its bill. We asked the responsible minister, the Solicitor General, the other day in the House, would he commit right now at this time to that level of enforcement, and he would not do so. We have nothing from that side of the House to tell us that there should be any level of confidence in how we should view this legislation.

Section 207(4) of the Criminal Code allows for the introduction of gambling only if the government of the province undertakes to conduct and manage the video lottery scheme. You have to "conduct and manage" it to fit under this exception in the Criminal Code. There is nothing at all — the public needs to know this, the grossest omission possible — nothing that talks to the

operation of the scheme. In fact, we've been advised by a professor of law at the University of Toronto that your scheme to bring in video gambling machines is probably illegal because of your lack of responsibility in defining how you're going to conduct and manage these games of chance.

To suggest somehow that by introducing these 20,000 slot machines you're suddenly going to be able to wipe out any illegal activity is ludicrous. How does the proliferation of illegal machines justify the introduction of legal ones? Because we have a problem with illegal drugs and prostitution, does that mean your next step, the next bills you're introducing, is the sanctioning of brothels and crack houses? How will your average video lottery player know whether or not he or she is playing on an illegal machine? We've only just learned that in Quebec there's been a resurgence, an increase, of illegal VLTs because the operators get only 20% of the profit, which is twice as much as you're proposing to share with operators here, from a legal machine but they get 50% from an illegal one. There's absolutely no reason we should believe this government when it talks about controlling the criminal activity that's happening today.

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When we speak about entertainment, how can one so classify this machine, which has caused a surge in other provinces of appointments and treatment for gambling addiction because of the problems it creates in terms of people's addiction to it, because of the extra ways that this works to bring people to a point where they no longer can control their actions, and here we have this government importing this particular device? What is entertaining about the fact that now, and only since the introduction of video gambling, there is more money being spent on average on gambling in that province than there is on basic necessities like food? What is entertaining about the fact that at a gambling conference last week in Manitoba, addiction specialists from across the country confirmed that the widespread availability of video gambling has led to a pronounced increase in addiction treatment? With the fact that money that would be spent on shelter, food and clothing is now being spent by many to feed gambling addictions, including shortly the one of this government, and that marriages and families are suffering as a result, are we to believe that the members opposite find that entertaining?

I have with me an article from Thursday's Winnipeg Free Press. It's about a man who last Saturday committed suicide because of his addiction to video lottery terminals. His family is holding Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon personally responsible for this gentleman's death and has asked that he attend the funeral. Filmon is responsible, claim the victim's family, because he is the leader of the government responsible for the proliferation of video lottery terminals across the province. On the Friday night before his death, this gentleman borrowed \$800 from his cousin and proceeded to the hotel where he was seen playing the slot machines. After his death, the family found \$1.82 in his account.

Mr Speaker, don't take my word for any of this. Let's instead consider the submissions of the hundreds of witnesses who either appeared before the standing

committee on administration of justice or who presented written deputations.

Let's start with the Addiction Research Foundation. Mr Robin Room, vice-president of research at the Addiction Research Foundation, made his presentation last August 7. The research foundation, as many of you will know, is engaged in research, treatment and education programs to prevent and reduce the harm associated with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. They are also, however, authorized to work on gambling problems.

Bill 75, said Mr Room, concerns the regulation of two popular commodities: alcohol and gambling. He added he was confident that the province would get substantial revenues, because people are willing to pay. The government knows the weakness here. They know that the public is willing to pay substantially more than the cost of production and distribution for these pleasures.

Mr Room referred to a 1994 survey on the harmful effects of gambling. That survey concluded that 4% of Ontario adults reported harm to their family's financial position from their own gambling in the past 12 months, and about 1% reported problems in each of the other life areas: their home life or marriage; their friendships or social life; their work, studies or employment; and their physical health. Mr Room concluded that the survey confirmed that along with pleasure and pain for the gambler or drinker, there is much potential harm for other people.

The standing committee also heard from the Thunder Bay branch of the Addiction Research Foundation, from Mr Lyle Nicol, a consultant in community programs and a front-line worker. Mr Nicol had this to say about your Bill 75: "Video lottery terminals are considered to be the most addictive form of gambling. Government officials in Montana have suggested that VLTs have definitely increased the number of compulsive gamblers in that state, based primarily on the dramatic increase in the number of Gamblers Anonymous chapters since the introduction of the machines."

The fact that money that would otherwise be spent on basic needs is now being consumed by these addictions unfortunately does not twig any of the requisite responsibility that we need to see on the part of this government. It is not troubled by the readily available facts that "In Manitoba, 85% of clients being treated for compulsive gambling have problems with video lottery terminals, while in Saskatchewan and Alberta the numbers are about 75% and 65% respectively....the number of Gamblers Anonymous meetings in Winnipeg has doubled since video lottery terminals came to town in 1993. Some of the most compelling reasons for playing video lottery terminals are:" — things that should have been known and should have been looked into by this government — "winning money, lights, sound," the combination of video games, "...an escape from reality, excitement, instant gratification, they are current, modern and seem to be," according to this expert, "a benign relative of personal computers" and they appear to be, on the surface, a game of skill when they are in fact games of chance.

Mr Nicol also shares Mr Room's assertion that VLTs in licensed establishments — and we've heard about this recently in Alberta, to be confirmed by the fact of new

problems, that they're finding they give rise to cross-abuse problems involving both alcohol and gambling.

I want just to take another minute to read Mr Nicol's summation: "VLTs are a seductive form of gambling that can be very addictive, isolate people and promise instant gratification. The reality is that more people lose than win and in most treatment options, VLT players represent the largest percentage of people who are actively seeking help for gambling problems. All of these issues must be taken into account before these machines are allowed to become accessible to consumers in Ontario."

The Addiction Research Foundation is one of the leading and perhaps the foremost source of information on addiction in this province. In both of these submissions, the government heard at first hand what the result and what the danger is of bringing video lottery slot machines into neighbourhoods across this province, what the dangers will be to individuals, to families, to employers and to communities. Surely this government cannot wilfully ignore the warnings that were presented to the standing committee on administration of justice and continue to go down this slippery slope. It has an obligation, and we will remind it in the faint hope that this government at the last hour will recognize it, to the health and wellbeing of all the individuals in this province. It has an obligation to try and uphold the quality of life that exists here. Video lottery terminals will reshape the social fabric this province is made of and it will be this government that will be held responsible.

Let me turn back to the point of charities, which I touched on earlier. Bill 75, according to the minister opposite, will increase revenues for charities. After all, we remember the title is "to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest," and "to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to liquor and gaming." You would think, therefore, that the charitable organizations of Ontario would be jumping up and down, that they'd be lobbying the Liberal members and the NDP members of this House and encouraging us to stop our attacks on this proposed legislation. Funnily enough, that's not happening, and this is certainly not what we heard at the standing committee hearings.

Charities First Ontario is a not-for-profit, voluntary organization with a membership of over 70 umbrella charitable organizations, including the March of Dimes. Each member organization represents many branches, affiliates and members. When their chairperson, Jeff Wilbee, appeared before the committee, he represented the charitable sector and thousands of volunteers. He had this to say about your video gambling machines: "The revenue from VLTs will have to be much greater than the loss in order for it to strongly appeal to charities. Under the proposed scheme, as we understand it, we not only lose revenue, we lose autonomy. Charities are interested in earning money, not just asking for handouts through the process of filling out grant request forms to some adjudication body. The present break-open ticket and bingo programs allow for autonomy while raising the revenue."

Ron Callaghan, who's with the industry that provides the services to charities and break-open tickets, had this to say, that there is a move "contrary to the best interests

of charitable funding, particularly the break-open ticket market, as VLTs will most certainly have a negative effect on the revenues derived" from that form of fund-raising. "This negative effect will be most profound if these VLTs are allowed in bars and restaurants," as you are proposing.

The experience in Alberta, where community agencies have lost up to 41% of their fund-raising revenues from break-open tickets since the introduction of VLTs, is clear. Though not necessarily comparable, it's an indication of what's going to happen here in Ontario when the charitable sector that currently depends on break-open tickets is faced with competition, not from any other sector but the government — the government that wants to confiscate their money because it can't add up its own books. Alberta did not have the well-developed third-party sales of break-open tickets in convenience stores that have been developed here, but because of that, the assumption of the industry is that Ontario's charitable sector will suffer an even greater loss to this government's greed than the 41% their counterparts lost in Alberta.

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The list doesn't stop here. Other charitable organizations that appeared before the standing committee opposed to the introduction of VLTs in licensed premises included such famous rabble-rousers as the Arthritis Society, the Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, B'nai Brith Canada, the Charitable Gaming Federation of Ontario, Operation Go Home of the greater Toronto area, the National Broadcast Reading Service, B'nai Israel Brotherhood, Persons United for Self-Help of Thunder Bay, Skills Canada and so on.

This bill represents an attack on the ability and the sustainability of those charities. Those charities were not consulted ahead of time, those charities were not offered the option of not having VLTs, and those charities have told this government a resounding no to Bill 75. Yet this government has the audacity to not even acknowledge their concerns in the way it introduces this legislation.

This government also proposes to bring in, it says, charitable gaming halls, which are really, if they were being a tiny bit clear and straightforward about this, casinos. They're bringing in mini-casinos with 100 video lottery terminals and 40 tables at each location. These are not just charitable enterprises. There's nothing even mini about that. These are casinos now that this government is breaking its promise on and not even putting to local referenda.

One of the most interesting developments since this bill has been passed is the response that's come forward from municipalities. Municipalities in surprising numbers are passing resolutions to prevent the introduction of video lottery terminals into their jurisdictions. I have a list of 45 municipalities that have opposed video lottery terminals outright. I have another list of 12 municipalities that want to have a local option, which at one time you promised could happen, to determine for themselves if these video gambling machines should be in their neighbourhoods. That's 56 jurisdictions that are concerned with Bill 75. This list is going to become larger and larger as time goes on.

You need to know, because you haven't listened well, that the city of Barrie, the city of Owen Sound, the town of Bancroft, the town of Parry Sound, Timmins, North York, the city of Etobicoke, Waterloo, Mississauga, the township of Norfolk, the town of Kincardine and, interestingly enough, of course, as mentioned earlier in the House, the city of North Bay, the Premier's home town, passed resolutions banning video lottery terminals. But the government doesn't want to listen to North Bay, it doesn't want to listen to the interests of average people in this province, because Bill 75 is the way that it's going to milk vulnerable people, it's going to milk small towns of the money that used to go to charities. It's going to take money away from people who used to spend it on things that circulated in the community.

It's obvious that this government is starting to have a problem on its hands. Fifty-six municipalities want to decide for themselves whether or not video lottery slot machines should be permitted to appear in their neighbourhood bars and restaurants. What is this government going to do? Is it going to allow them to make this decision on their own or is it going to do what it appears to be set up to do with its introduction for third reading and turn a deaf ear simply because it's so attached to the money it has to bring in?

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario says, "A direct reference to local consultation in the act would have demonstrated the government's commitment to strengthen local government autonomy." Instead, AMO goes on to note, "The government should also have ensured a portion of VLT revenues remain in the community." The province has done nothing to address the concerns of local municipalities that remain opposed to Bill 75.

Minister, if this government in its wisdom passes Bill 75, will you give municipalities a legislated option of refusing video slot machines in their boundaries, and will you at the same time legislate that a portion of VLT revenues remain in the community from which they were derived? Because we're sucking out thousands, and indeed millions, and in totality probably close to \$1 billion, from local communities simply to feed the mismanagement of this government.

It's obvious from what we observed in the committee that this government was not interested in the submissions that we heard. It is obvious that Bill 75 is before us today without any amendment.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): You sucked money out in taxes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Etobicoke-Humber.

Mr Kennedy: After three weeks of committee hearings, the government has not incorporated the recommendations of even one of its witnesses. Not one single recommendation was paid attention to by this government. It's even more obvious when you look at the committee proceedings on September 30. Some information had been brought to my attention that the government had already begun the process of lining up VLT manufacturers and suppliers.

Even before this bill has been passed in the House, Mr Flaherty here opposite has admitted that the Ontario

Lottery Corp has advertised for expressions of interest from suppliers and manufacturers. He's also admitted that a request for proposal, a demand for someone to fill a position for consultant, had already gone out. It is my understanding that this contract has now been filled and we know that an individual, even as we speak, even as this government purports to be interested in the views of the members of this House, is already working on the implementation of VLTs. It shows quite clearly, as Hansard did that day, Mr Flaherty, that your government's intentions here are simply to make this happen in as quick a manner as possible without any regard for the social consequences, without any regard for the opinions expressed by municipalities, members of the public, charities and indeed members of this House.

Precluding any conclusions being drawn by the standing committee and precluding the debate we have today in this House, we have this government already going ahead with video gambling machines. This government is not interested, and probably was never interested, to know what people had said in the hearings and the considerations of the members here today. The hearings, as the hiring of a consultant and the lack of changes in the bill demonstrate quite clearly, were a sham to cover this government's activity. At the very same time they were consulting with us, they had people hired and going around actually implementing their plans. They did this in the face of what we have to refer to as insurmountable evidence about the danger of video slot machines.

This government is already looking at manufacturers and suppliers and has a consultant working on implementing this system, even though this government knew ahead of time — even though it tried to avoid as much of the information as possible — that 125,000 people in Alberta are addicted to electronic slot machines. They may want to pay attention to this: In 1995, a public opinion survey in Alberta showed that more than two thirds of the public in that province are against video gambling machines.

While there is no courage yet on that side of the House, no one willing to speak against this proliferation of gambling, when the opponents complain that the machines are too addictive and argue the social damages outweigh the monetary benefit, we may yet get a member on the government side to pay attention. The government in that province was forced to cap the number of video gambling machines. They had to make sure that they listened to the public, and there may yet come a day for your government to do the same.

In Manitoba, since they brought in their video gambling machines, Manitobans have increased their average spending on gambling, so that's more than basic food-stuffs like bread, milk, eggs and vegetables. From Manitoba we've learned the phrase that's been coined, "the crack cocaine of gambling." You, and you alone — not any government before you, but you, the Mike Harris Conservative government — are bringing the crack cocaine of gambling into Ontario.

In June 1996, the Manitoba government was forced to reduce the number of video gambling machines by 10%. They reduced the number of VLTs on one site from 40 to 30. They implemented a program to review video

lottery gambling in an attempt to balance its gambling habit. It's too little too late. When we look in the legislation, what protection, what severe discipline is this government under? How is it going to control its addiction? It's going to review the effects of Bill 75 once every five years. That will, unfortunately, be too late — too late for the people affected in this province and too late for this government because it won't be around to see what happens five years from now.

In 1995, quite interestingly for this government, there was courage shown when the British Columbia government introduced its own Bill 75 and then reversed its decision. It had the courage to listen to the people in the community. It wasn't as greedy as this government is. The Nova Scotia government, in 1993, took back two thirds of its video gambling machines, what you guys are proposing to send out.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member from Durham, the member for Etobicoke-Humber, please.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): They're in bed with the mob —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, I won't accept that. Please withdraw, and that's it.

1700

Mr Pouliot: Since we don't court the same circles as they, I will withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. Just withdraw, please.

Mr Pouliot: I shall indeed, out of respect to you, Mr Speaker, withdraw.

Mr Kennedy: We understand well the consternation on the other side of the House, because at least a few of the people on the other side of the House have the same gut feeling that this is wrong, that caused legislators in 42 American states to ban VLTs in bars and restaurants. But we see no such expression of courage yet on the part of the other side of the House.

In Winnipeg last week, the largest-ever gambling conference, unfortunately necessitated by governments like the one opposite, had to come together to discuss the impact of gambling, and it confirmed that the bulk of addiction gambling problems are with video gambling machines and not with casinos, video gambling machines that are going to be called in future Mike Harris gambling machines because they are unique to this government. It's a unique form of gambling that this government is making available to every neighbourhood in the province.

The people who play VLTs are by far the largest recipients of gambling addiction treatment programs in the western provinces. But thanks to the efforts of many people across this province and despite the best efforts of this government, nobody's going to be able to say that this government went into this mess with their eyes closed — with their minds closed, that's to be sure, but not their eyes — because there's evidence everywhere about the negative impacts about video gambling machines. There's evidence from police, from our own addiction specialists, from community and charitable organizations and from the other Canadian provinces. This fallout will be on this government's head and they will deserve it.

Lastly, I want to acquaint the public with the things that this Bill 75 does not say, because it's far more important than the small scanty details this government had the courage to put forward. There is nothing in this legislation that tells us the number of video slot machines that will be introduced, not one iota. There is nothing to tell us the number of VLTs that each establishment will have in it. There is nothing to say whether there will be any kind of limit on the payout that comes from a video gambling machine, even whether or not this government will allow players to have direct access to their credit cards or to cheque-cashing opportunities while they're playing — protections that have been asked for by addiction organizations across the province.

There is absolutely nothing, despite what this minister has said, despite what has been said before in the House, in the legislation committing this government to put one cent into addiction gambling. There is nothing that says 1% or 10% or anything will go into the addiction that this government knows full well it's bringing to this province. There is nothing to say how much the government share will be or how much a proprietor will receive. There is nothing that legislates that 2% of revenue will go to gambling and problem addiction. There is nothing that says the government's share of revenue will be allocated towards reducing the debt or any other initiatives in society. There is nothing to tell us that if the money goes to charity they can depend on this greedy government to do it in a fair and unbiased manner, when they take the money out of all the local towns and cities across the province, bring it to Toronto, take it away from those local organizations and then make them come begging for it.

There is nothing that will legislate additional funding for any incremental policing that our police enforcement agencies have told us they're going to need to control VLTs. There is nothing that says there will be an increase in inspectors to carry out the increase in responsibilities to prevent youths, to prevent others, from using these machines, and it's all part of a pattern of recklessness that this bill is about.

There's nothing to tell us who will oversee the management of VLTs to prevent criminal organizations from becoming involved, as they have elsewhere, who is going to purchase the machines, who's going to service them and what will be the criteria for choosing locations.

In closing, there is nothing that this government has done to deal with the very real concerns of Ontarians, and everyone on the other side of this House should hang their head in shame.

Mr Crozier: I rise today to add to the comments of my colleague from York South on Bill 75. I want to say at the outset that we have heard from many people, many groups across the province of Ontario about this bill. We had three weeks of hearings in which there was a very strong lobby from various groups, those being the hospitality industry, the horse racing industry, the charities, and individuals.

We've all heard the same thing. It's curious to me, but I suppose not unusual, that we interpret it differently.

It was said earlier today by one of the members across that, yes, we had heard from the racing industry and the

hospitality industry and that they've listened to them, and so have we. The thing we have listened to that concerns us the most is those charities that we have heard from that are going to be cannibalized by these machines and the public we have heard from who fear the effects it's going to have on our social structure.

After having heard all that, I'm comfortable with my position. I'm comfortable because I think we've listened and we've come to some compromise on this bill, quite frankly, contrary to the government. I only wish, although I doubt, that some government backbenchers will have the courage to stand up and speak against this bill if they truly feel there are some parts of it that they are not comfortable with. I challenge those members to stand and give comment on those parts of the bill that they are not comfortable with.

This bill, as we are told, is An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to liquor and gaming. Quite frankly, there are parts of this bill that we didn't attempt to amend that would seem reasonable on their own. But when you look at the compendium of the bill and it says that it's to provide for the future transfer of the regulatory functions of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario to the new commission, that's a reasonable thing to look at. This bill, in the end, did not centre on those recommendations. But it's the one that says it's to provide for the management of video lottery terminals by the Ontario Lottery Corp and for the regulation of suppliers of video lottery terminals and for prohibitions with respect to the use of or access to VLTs by persons under the age of 19 that we have some grave concern with.

Speaker, I think you know as well as I and the rest of the members of this Legislature that the official debate will carry on, and at some point either the debate will end by mutual consent or perhaps the government will have to bring in closure, but nothing is going to change. Through you, Speaker, I want the people of Ontario to understand today that no matter what our argument, this is a *fait accompli*. Unless this government comes to its senses and chooses not to ask for royal assent on this bill, it will be initiated. I only hope that people who are listening to this debate today, that people who hear about it, that people who come to a better understanding of what VLTs — slot machines — really are will call their MPPs, the way they've called me, and that those MPPs will take the obligation I have taken to express their opinion.

Today, unfortunately, is the beginning of a watershed for gaming in the province of Ontario. Bill 75, if you will, is an omnibus bill. Through the use of a few clauses, it has the power to exponentially increase gambling across the province of Ontario and to increase government's hand in gambling across the province of Ontario.

I've become convinced throughout the hearings that the one area that's most addicted to gambling in this province is the government itself. Only a few weeks before this bill was introduced, I feel reasonably certain that video slot machines were not on the table. But the finance people came to the government and they said: "Well,

Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves, we've got a problem. We need more money, and slot machines are the revenue-makers that we need."

1710

If you think about it, governments over the years have all contributed to the debt of this province. But this government, even before it reaches its mandate but near the end of its mandate, has already told us that the public debt is going to increase from \$100 billion to approximately \$120 billion.

How is that \$120 billion broken down? Well, the Liberal government, in its time, contributed \$4 billion to the debt. The NDP government, in its time, contributed \$61 billion to the debt. But the provincial Conservative governments — and we can talk about these figures later but I suspect they're within a billion or so of being correct — will have over the years contributed \$55 billion to the public debt.

How did they do this? They've already contributed \$35 billion up to when they were last in power and they're telling us now they're going to go out and borrow another \$20 billion so that they can afford to give a tax cut. Notwithstanding the fact that they are going to have to borrow \$20 billion to do that, the finance guys have come along and said: "That's not enough. You've got to find some more revenue." So they've gone to video slot machines in bars and restaurants to help solve their problem.

Make no mistake. Bill 75, despite its brevity, is a reckless, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants document. It opens the door, as my colleague has said, to a form of gaming that other jurisdictions have dared to adopt, and some have not adopted it at all. Yet as we sit here today, this government has taken little heed of those warnings. The government's motive, I suggest, is purely greed. Plain and simple, they need the money. You won't hear the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations say that, nor will the Minister of Finance say that, although we know that finance officials are already counting the money.

However, Ab Campion, director of communications for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, conceded, "I don't think anybody would deny that revenue had a lot to do with it." He went on to admit, and I quote, "Everybody is trying to do it as quickly as possible," under orders from on high. That was quoted in the Windsor Star of May 1, 1996.

What you will hear the ministry say, however, is that there is a burning need to control illegal VLTs in the province. Of course the OPP is strongly silent on this, or at least careful with their words on the issue, because they're not fools. They know who their bosses are. However, Sergeant Larry Moodie of the OPP's illegal gaming division said that just because the government legalizes VLTs, or video slot machines, doesn't mean the illegal machines will disappear. Sergeant Larry Moodie says: "There's too much profit in it. It will take substantial enforcement to do that."

During the public hearings, we heard what I will call the government's witnesses drone on about the need to give their industry a boost, about how we can attract tourists with these machines. The truth is, the restaurants and bars in this province should be selling food and drink

to the best of their competitive abilities. If VLTs are to be the saviour, it says a lot more about the problems within the industry than we may know.

We're heard that licensed establishments in Alberta became more dependent on video slot machines and patrons shifted the money they spent from food and alcohol to the machines. This was reported in the *Toronto Star* in August 1996. The answers to the hospitality industry's problems lie more with consumer confidence and with the ability to help them attract tourism to the province for its beauty and for what it has to offer all tourists, family tourists. I really question whether a video slot machine in a corner bar is going to attract very many tourists. The answer is more in service to the public and attracting the public than it is in draw poker.

You see, on the surface, Bill 75 appears to be an exercise in modernization, in streamlining, in control, in improved entertainment, and we've already heard these words from a previous minister. But what Bill 75 really does is to attempt to extract taxes on a voluntary basis. The government will be in effect bribing the province's charitable groups, the hospitality industry, the raceways, and all along it will be able to mitigate its social concerns by getting a piece of the action. It's clear that that part of Bill 75 has a social and moral component.

Having said that, I would also suggest that much of Bill 75 is workable. We have no interest in attempting to legislate morality, but we strongly feel that something needs to be done in the area of gaming policy in the province of Ontario. Bill 75 doesn't do that. It completely ignores the fact that what has happened in gaming over the last three governments has been ad hoc. Unfortunately, what could have been a forum for hearing what the public really thinks about the issues such as the proper role of charitable casinos, the desirability of lottery terminals, didn't happen. The government has already made a value judgement about their existence — this, of course, despite the promise of consultation on the issue before legislative action. Instead, we had a committee of the Legislature soliciting views on a bill that's being pushed through the Legislature.

I'd like to speak for a few minutes about trends. First, we know this: VLTs are in eight other provinces, as well as in some US states. What can we learn from them? We can learn that at the very least, we must tread carefully. The Premier, it seemed, used to be of this view. In a letter from Mr Harris to Charities First Ontario, the Premier said, "A Harris government will not move on VLTs until all sectors have been consulted, all impacts are assessed and an agreement is reached on the distribution of revenues." This was in a letter to John Chalmers, chairman of the Charitable Gaming Alliance, May 16, 1995.

Let me emphasize that what the speaker said was "until all sectors have been consulted, all impacts are assessed and an agreement is reached on the distribution of revenues." The government has said, "We're going to give you 10%." There's been no agreement on the distribution of revenues. It's just as simple as that: "We're going to give you 10%. We're pretty generous." They haven't said how that 10% is going to be distributed to the charities across Ontario; they haven't said how they'll be affected,

how they're going to be reimbursed for the money that's cannibalized by these machines.

"All impacts are assessed." We have yet to see one study from this government that assesses the impact of video lottery terminals, slot machines, in the province of Ontario — not one study — and yet the Premier said all impacts will be assessed.

We know that most of the evidence to date is either negative or it's inconclusive. We must ask then, why Bill 75? This bill not only opens the door for the introduction of video slot machines to the gaming sector but creates a dangerous merger between the gaming and liquor commissions. I say "dangerous" because there will exist an easy licensing mechanism for video slot machines in licensed establishments. It's one simple amending sentence away from reality.

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Efficiency arguments aside, this merger has far more implications than many of us can imagine. First, we know there aren't enough inspectors to uphold existing liquor laws in our licensed establishments. This says nothing of the illegal ones operating in the province. Second, how this supercommission, with its limited resources, is to patrol an additional 20,000 video slot machines is beyond comprehension.

The short answer is, I don't think they can do it. We have been told that illegal machines will not be eliminated by the introduction of legal machines. We're then going to have the possibility of twice as many machines than we had in the past. We asked today in the Legislature, "How do you tell, when you walk in, a legal machine from an illegal machine?"

We've also been advised today, by my colleague from York South, that with the payment of 10% or 20% from these machines — how is that going to compare to the 50% that illegal machines pay off to their operators? The inspectors simply won't be able to do it.

This brings me to another of the government's justifications for Bill 75 and the legalization of these slot machines: the ability to control the grey market, the illegal video slot machine. As I've said, I don't think I should even have to explain why this reasoning is so ridiculous. First, if we take the minister's argument to its logical conclusion, it would result in the legalization of all formerly prohibited actions and vices. What we'd end up with then, I think, is anarchy. While I don't want to engage too much in hyperbole, I will say that at the very least the government is on a slippery slope.

Let's look at a cigarette vending machine, a proposal the Tories supported. We took them out of licensed establishments because the sale of tobacco couldn't be adequately monitored, and now we're led to believe that a barful of VLTs will be better monitored. I disagree.

Let me reiterate just a few points. The trend is towards limiting them in other provinces. Addiction studies have borne out the problems. Charities have questioned them versus other forms of gaming revenue.

Control: We want to control this type of gaming where it exists illegally. We should be enforcing laws, not watering them down.

Choice: We understand this is a muddy issue for some. Many can control the use of gambling and many cannot,

yet studies have shown that this form of gambling is particularly addictive, especially for the young and the less well-off. Therefore we need to choose whether we should pursue this type of gaming at all. Second, we should ensure that communities across this province have the right to choose whether or not to allow this form of gaming on every street corner. You've heard today that over 40 municipalities have already passed resolutions opposing the introduction of VLTs, and I suspect there will be more.

It's interesting to note that the Premier's home town last week approved a motion objecting to the introduction of VLTs in their community. But I guess the Premier doesn't feel he has to listen to those who sent him to this place. I suggest that he should start listening at home. Even the Premier is being told, "We don't want video lottery slot machines in our community." If your own home town tells you that and you don't start to listen at home, you may suffer the consequences.

Let's keep in mind that we're affecting the nature of our communities in this province if and when — and it will after this debate — Bill 75 will pass.

This is an issue that raises a larger trend, which I mentioned at the outset: the ability of the government to function without these gaming revenues. Having our health care and education funding levels dependent upon people gambling is actually an alarming prospect, yet we're headed down that road. I've come to the conclusion, as I said before but I want to emphasize, that the provincial government is the most addicted to gambling.

We have an opportunity to pause for thought. Very little thought has gone into gaming and its policy over the last 20 years in this province. Ad hockey has been the norm. As new games are developed and introduced, be they scratch-and-win, Pro Line or 6/49, we've continually increased the pie and the slices from it. However, like all good things they must come to an end. The gaming pot is not bottomless. Even if we assume that government-sanctioned gambling is a good thing, likely we would all agree that the government must control what is otherwise so tempting to abuse. We must ask to what degree should gaming take place. We must also ask tough questions like who should decide: Is it a local issue or a provincial one?

Communities will feel the effects first hand and will be called upon to deal with the fallout of Bill 75, yet we proposed amendments to Bill 75 that would make this gaming a local option. What happened? The government side of the committee turned it down. We proposed a number of amendments based on what we had heard people across the province tell us. What happened? The government turned them down. They don't even want local communities to have the option not to have these insidious machines on their street corners.

As Eric Dowd wrote, and I quote: "Premier Mike Harris has this strict principle on gambling: He's against it unless it can make his government a lot of money."

I have with me today 58 pages of Hansard that ran over the last two or three years. Do you know what I found in them? I found a comment made by Ernie Eves on July 26, 1993: "When a government turns its back on the very principles and reasons it was elected to power, should not that government give the public an opportunity

to express its opinion?" Nothing was said in the Common Sense Revolution about video slot machines. I recall on many occasions that the Premier emphasized it would be a local option, that there would be a province-wide referendum.

We're going to have at least 20,000 of these slot machines across the province with no public option, no referendum. I suggest that 20,000 is only the beginning because there's nothing in this bill that limits the number of VLTs in this province. Nothing in the bill limits the number of slot machines that can be put on every corner, virtually, of communities in this province. I think the pressure is going to be difficult to resist if the hospitality industry, when they say they would like to have the option of these slot machines, starts to come to the minister and say: "Hey, wait a minute. You gave the bar down the street five video slot machines. I want five." There are 15,000 licensed establishments in Ontario.

Mr Eves also said in that same debate, and he was talking to the government of the day, "Why won't you give the people of Ontario and" — at that time — "the people of Windsor the same democratic right that the people in these states have had?"

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It goes on. As I said, there were 58 pages where I can take selections of quotes by Mr Eves and Premier Harris that would appear on the surface to oppose the introduction of video slot machines.

Members of this Legislature have an opportunity and a responsibility, I suggest, to look at this issue in more than just economic terms. We must look beyond solving the short-term cash crunch caused by tax cuts and large deficits. We must resist the easy way out. Above all, we must listen, not only to those with vested interests, but to those who will live with the consequences of the legislation, should it pass today.

We've heard a lot in the last couple of weeks about a report that the justice committee requested be given to us. I respect the reason that it was not. This report was called *Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns*, 1995. When we requested that report from the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, we were told there was confidential and sensitive information in it. There were probably names and places and strategies for fighting the criminal element in both legal and illegal gambling in the province of Ontario.

The Solicitor General stood day after day, saying, "I can't get the report because I would be criticized for interfering in the operations of the OPP." We weren't asking him to interfere in their operations. We weren't asking him to direct the OPP or any other enforcement service to act in any way. What we were asking the Solicitor General was, "Since you're responsible for the police services in this province, at least review the report and advise your cabinet colleagues and caucus colleagues of what it might contain."

At first, as a matter of fact, he denied that he knew anything about the report. Then one day outside the House, only about a week ago: "Ah, my memory is better. I just remembered. Yes, we received what they call a current issue; subject, illegal gambling; ministry, Solicitor General and Corrections; date, March 18, 1996."

Before this bill was ever introduced, before the budget was ever introduced, the Solicitor General suddenly remembered there was a briefing note on that.

There are some concerned people in this province who, although they haven't circulated the report, have certainly given us access to the briefing note. In spite of our continued pleas to the Solicitor General that he share this information — not have any effect on the operations of the OPP, just share the information with the Legislature, with his cabinet, with his colleagues at least so they might be able to decide how they feel about these insidious little machines being introduced holus-bolus across the province — he still refuses to do that.

That leads me to quote from the current issue — not the report; this is not *Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns, 1995*, prepared by the Criminal Intelligence Service, but the brief that was given to the minister. Frankly, to those across, the Solicitor General has decided it's not fit to share these concerns with you, yet you're going to have to help us decide what we're going to do with this bill.

In this ministry issue note, part of the summary says that there was a comprehensive report entitled *Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns, 1995*, and that the analysis shows that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there's a potential for abuse in the legal gaming sector. In other words, criminals will flourish in the legal sector, not only in the illegal as they're doing now. It goes on to say that legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased, with interest shown in bookies, wagering on sports events, video gambling machines and gaming houses.

I don't know what more anyone could say. I don't know what other argument we could use. I don't know what other caution we could give this government when it comes to the criminal element infiltrating legal gambling in the province than to quote from this where it specifically mentions video gambling machines: "The two major gambling activities of sports bookmaking and video gambling machines annually earn an estimated \$1 billion and \$500 million, respectively, for the criminal element."

Someone might say, "We're going to give them a part of the profit." It's not only the fact that the part of the take may not be enough for some of these establishments that might want to have illegal machines in them, but these legal machines don't give credit. Oftentimes an addicted gambler needs credit. I know the machines will be set up so that if you've perhaps put \$10 in you can gamble your \$10 away and until you put another \$10 in it's not going to work for you. But the way the illegal ones work is, the person in the establishment who is responsible for these illegal machines says, "Sure, I'll advance you \$100." You win, you lose, you win, you lose, but we all know that eventually you lose and he lends you another \$100. That won't happen with the legal machines, so these illegal machines will still flourish. In fact, the legal machines may get them addicted, they may not have the money to play them and they may go to the illegal machines so they can borrow money to play them.

In addition, in a letter dated August 8, 1996, the acting staff inspector of special investigation services for the Metropolitan Toronto Police said this:

"We at special investigation services have received complaints from family members of those who use these machines complaining of financial devastation due to illegal VLTs. These people are the victims, and while I admit not all users are pathological gamblers, I do believe those numbers are growing and will continue to grow with the legalization of VLTs. I suggest that you will find that the growing use of VLTs is a symptom of a greater malaise related to gambling addiction. I believe those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect."

It goes on to say, "Illegal machines, which are not subject to taxation or return-percentage monitoring, are virtual cash collectors and, in the absence of strong enforcement, may become indistinguishable as legitimate equipment."

The letter says, "In closing, I would like to draw your attention to the position held by the chief of police of the London Police Service, J. Fantino," who is chairman of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, CISO. "CISO is not in favour of the video lottery terminals. However, since the government is committed, adequate policing must be in place to properly deal with the security for the introduction of video lottery terminals."

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Of course he put that rider on. The government has said it's going to increase it, but this bill doesn't say they're going to increase it. There is nothing in this bill that says this government has to do anything to further control illegal gambling or the criminal involvement in legal gambling in the province of Ontario — nothing. That's all we're asking the government to do: Listen to the experts. I've barely touched on what addiction is today, all the expert opinion that we've had on addiction to gambling in this province, what it does to families, what it does to our communities. But no, we're only going to listen to those who need these insidious little machines to stimulate the patrons who come into their business. Even then, they've been warned that what really happens is that the money just goes from one area in the business to another.

I can understand why the government would pick that argument and choose only to listen to that lobby, and that's because it needs the money. That's because they've been told: "We don't have much choice. We need more revenue." Economic Development Minister Saunderson has recently said of VLTs: "They're a good source of cash. Financially, they make sense." It may make financial sense to the minister because it will help them in their revenue side, but frankly, does it make financial sense to those individuals who are going to be addicted to them? Does the \$50,000 annually per machine that's possibly going to be taken out of that community make financial sense? Do they make sense to the break-open ticket people, who on numerous occasions appeared before us and feel that their industry, just the employment side of their industry, is going to be devastated, not to say how the charities that now rely on break-open tickets are going to be affected?

The government backbenchers have a better pulse for the feel of Ontario than do the ministers of this government, and they have a better pulse of Ontario than the

Premier of this province when it comes to video slot machines. I know what they're hearing in the coffee shops and what I'm hearing in the coffee shops: that this government is crazy — they use the term "crazy" — to introduce this kind of gambling. We already have casinos. Why not just leave the slot machines in the casinos?

Mr Flaherty: They're crazy about you.

Mr Crozier: The member across, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, says, "They're crazy about you." I certainly hope so, but I'm not going to rely on that. They may be crazy about some of you. These slot machines are your machines. It was asked by the parliamentary assistant earlier today, "Who introduced gambling to Ontario?" I've not ever paid a lot of attention to gambling, but I suspect that if we go back it was a Conservative government that introduced gambling to Ontario. I suggest it was a Conservative government that was in power when the major lotteries started in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: Maybe it goes back even that far, but we're giving you the opportunity to pause. We're asking that you pause, that you think of a comprehensive way that all gambling should be introduced in Ontario, but particularly that you look at video slot machines and their introduction to every corner store in the province of Ontario. Excuse me, I should correct that: We're not talking about corner stores. I got carried away with myself. We're talking about licensed bars and restaurants.

But there are some highlights from the video lottery terminal presentations that the government members may not remember. Here's what some of them had to say, and these are all in Hansard: "VLTs are a seductive form of gambling that can be very addictive, isolate people and promise instant gratification. The reality is that more people lose than win" and in most areas VLT players comprise the largest percentage of people who are actively seeking help from gambling problems. That's Lyle Nicol, the Addiction Research Foundation in Thunder Bay.

From Terry Sisson, Charitable Gaming Federation of Ontario: "Should this province want to make money at the expense of a provincial charity that is making \$1 million a year for local patient services and much-needed research to find a cure for a disease that attacks 70,000 Ontario residents?" Should they make money at the expense of those provincial charities?

Here's another quote: "Under the proposed scheme as we understand it, we'll not only lose revenue, we'll lose autonomy. Charities are interested in earning money, not just asking for handouts through the process of filling out grant request forms to some body. The present break-open ticket program...allows for autonomy while raising revenue." That was from Jeff Wilbee, Charities First Ontario.

My time is coming to a close. I only wish that rather than this being a fait accompli, the government would think about this. I know it's out of the control of the backbenchers now. You've been told to vote for it and I assume you will. Many of you are team players, so you'll probably vote for this, but particularly — no. I was going to say rural Ontario because I come from rural Ontario.

I suspect it's coming from all parts of Ontario: the concern over the introduction of video slot machines in licensed establishments and bars.

I said at the outset that I'm comfortable, I'm at peace with my position on this bill. When this bill passes and I vote against it, I'll be able to go back to my community and I'll feel comfortable in the way I've represented them, and when the complaints start to come in about families that have been ruined, about charities that are losing money that's cannibalized by these machines, I'll feel comfortable that I've done all I can.

But there's still something that can be done. There are backbenchers on that side of the room, that side of the Legislature, who can stand up, have the courage to listen to some of what we have been listening to, and say: "Wait a minute, government. This bill can go so far, but as it stands now, this bill goes too far." I say to you over there that the yoke of these video slot machines and what they do to society will be on your shoulders.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pouliot: I thank both members opposite who have spoken so well vis-à-vis what's about to happen, which is the proliferation of the worst form of junk. What is being done here is illicit, it is vile, it is immoral indeed.

The government, in its insatiable thirst for extra dollars, has passed all imaginable thresholds. Snake oil merchants — that term isn't too strong — opium that you smoke with your eyes and your ears. Oh, they will start slowly, with 6,000 of those unarmed bandits, then they will graduate to 20,000. They will be in bars and restaurants, and I wouldn't be surprised if they made their illicit entrance into the school rooms of this province, so you can make an offering at the altar to reconcile the almighty dollar to justify a tax cut for the winner-take-all, for the more fortunate.

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Whatever happened to the idea of referendum, to municipal jurisdiction, to a local say in the affairs of your community? You will raid right at the very heart of charity organizations and religious groups. The octopus, the government does not give you a say. They're going to shove that hunk of junk down your throat and grab every penny out of your pocket. The most vulnerable will be put upside down. They will shake their legs until the last drop of blood, the last nickel drops, for the sanctity of Don Harris, and the backbenchers won't say a word because they're only soldiers in a much larger family.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Much of what we've heard here today is rhetoric and opinion. It reminds me very much of a saying I heard when I was a young boy, and that is, "Don't confuse me with facts; my mind is already made up."

The member for Essex South quoted Larry Moodie of the OPP, who has reportedly stated that the problem of illegal VLTs won't necessarily disappear because of legalization of VLTs. There are other quotations:

"The legalization of various forms of gambling, VLTs, in some provinces has significantly reduced illegal gambling activities in those areas." That was from the 1992 organized crime committee report, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

"City police forces and the RCMP indicate that current controls on VLTs in Alberta have been very effective in limiting illegal gambling. In their view, eliminating VLTs or drastically limiting their availability will only open the doors to illegal gambling." That's from the 1995 report of the Alberta lotteries review committee.

There are many, many more quotes. What I'm trying to get at here is that we have in our population 1% to 2% of the people who will gamble, who are addicted to gambling, but the vast majority of people are not addicted to it. The vast majority of people want to gamble for entertainment. In the 1920s, when we had Prohibition, the same argument could have been used that the legalization of liquor would not eliminate the illegal distribution, but it did. If we would use the same arguments that these members do, then we would still have Prohibition.

VLTs are no more addictive than —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'd like to add a few comments. I listened attentively to the speeches that were made this afternoon — to my colleague from York South; to my colleague from Essex South, the chief critic for this area — and I think they argued and made some very good points worthy of some consideration. The question is whether that carries any weight and whether it is any part of the consideration of this bill.

I would offer two points. One is that there is, without doubt, more and more revenue being gained by this government by way of gambling. Therefore, when people say, "It looks like the government likewise is becoming addicted to gambling," it's hard for you to say, "No, it is not," because it is. Of course, when you add your objective of the deficit plus a \$5-billion tax cut and you're looking for money, that's why people say you're addicted to revenues.

The argument has come back, "We want to do away with illegal video slot machines," but I contend that if you did want to do that, why would you not have said, "Fine, we will offer a 50-50 arrangement, the same way as the machine operators who operate illegally offer those who distribute to them." I'll point out to you the strategy that worked for the federal government in terms of reducing taxes to a certain level where it did not become worthwhile for people to trade in illegal tobacco. It worked. You have not offered that argument, and because of that I suspect your real motivation is to find more money for your own coffers and that you really do not care about some of the people who will be adversely affected.

Ms Martel: I want to commend both the member for York South and the member for Essex South for their comments here this afternoon. I want to reinforce two points that were made: one with respect to the concerns of the local charities that, at the end of the day, most of the charities raising money now that goes back into the community aren't going to see a penny of that money any more; and second, that the government really, really is

going down the wrong track when it refuses to look at the evidence that has been placed before us by the OPP.

In the first case, the local charities that appeared in Sudbury on Tuesday, August 20, for the most part felt they were never going to see a penny of that 10% revenue the province was going to turn around and put back into the communities. The point those groups made over and over again is that through the sale of Nevada tickets, the money raised stays in the local community to be used to service the needs in the local community. They don't believe, when they have to compete against the big organized charities that have paid, full-time fundraisers, that they're going to be able to convince the government that they're a legitimate charity, that the needs they service are legitimate ones. They believe they're going to be shut right out and shut down. Many of the groups that came forward relied on the sale of Nevada tickets and the proceeds to continue to provide the important work they do in my community. They don't believe that any kind of consultation from here on in is going to allow them to get any share of the proceeds that are going to be made here.

Second, I say again to the minister, who is here, that I cannot believe the government would not want to provide in a very public way the results from the OPP work that was done that shows the influence of the mob with respect to VLTs. Why don't you want to do that? Why don't you want to see what their concerns are? Why are you heading down this path that people who are in the know say we shouldn't be going down? Do you really need the money that badly?

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Essex South, you have two minutes.

Mr Crozier: I've repeated several times that I'm quite comfortable with my position, the position of my caucus, on this bill. I have said many times over at the committee what my position is.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: There's a member across who's chirping away. Well, he wasn't at all the meetings.

The speaker from Kitchener seemed to criticize some other comment of some other agency. Well, I bring to your attention again that the elite Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario said, as recently as March of this year, that legal video gambling machines will never replace illegal machines. I present that as evidence for you, Speaker, the members of the Legislature and those who may be listening.

One has to ask finally, is it for the money? Is it only for the money? Is the government willing to risk increased crime, increased addiction, increased family problems, all for the sake of a few bucks? The next time we go to the people of Ontario, I'll be quite comfortable with having taken the position that these insidious little slot machines are not worth a few bucks.

The Deputy Speaker: Being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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(Hansard)**

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Tuesday 22 October 1996

Mardi 22 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today I rise to inform the House about yet another demonstration being organized to protest the recent fate of Sudbury's health care system as executed by the bulldozer driven by none other than the health minister. Tomorrow at 1 o'clock Sudburians will form a human chain of resistance around our community hospitals. This will symbolize that the community will stand united, resolute and fortified in its determination not to be plowed under by this government's destructive decision to eliminate hospitals, jobs and the renowned health care services that have made Sudbury the referral centre for northeastern Ontario.

The Minister of Health is wasting an undisclosed number of valuable health care dollars on a communications firm to assess public reaction to Sudbury's hospital closings. If the Minister of Health really wants to know what Sudburians are thinking, I invite him to go to Sudbury tomorrow and to talk personally with my constituents, my fellow Sudburians, who will be participating in this human chain of resistance.

The system is too small. We need more beds. We need more money reinvested. We need more operating rooms. We need better health care. Protect Sudbury's health care jobs. Ask them yourself. Are they satisfied? The answer is no. Join us in this human chain of resistance.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I couldn't agree more with the member for Sudbury, who just made a passionate statement about the diminishing of services to the people of northern Ontario and across this province.

It's in line with this that there will be a whole whack of people from Sault Ste Marie in Toronto this weekend. They'll be coming by bus and they will march up Avenue Road, literally hundreds of them, to vent their frustration, to lay in front of this House how angry they are with the agenda of this government and the impact it's having on them and their families and on their neighbours and friends in northern Ontario.

We'll be leaving Friday night at 11 o'clock from Marconi Hall, where we'll have gathered for a celebration over spaghetti and meatballs, and we'll be driving through the night to Toronto. On Saturday we'll be joining literally thousands of people from across this province to make a statement.

We hope the Premier and his cabinet will be here to see and listen and hopefully come to an understanding of the amount of frustration that's growing out there every day, with every decision that's made, with every realization of the impact of the cuts they're making on the lives of people, their families, neighbours and friends who live in communities across this province.

We'll be here from Sault Ste Marie and we'll be joining with people from Timmins, Hamilton, Windsor and Sudbury, from every community, nook and cranny across this province. We'll walk proudly up Avenue Road to say to this government, "Stop it, and stop it now."

LIBRARY WEEK

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): It's my honour to announce that once again it's time to celebrate Ontario Library Week. During this week, millions of people across Ontario will be celebrating the vital contribution that libraries make to their communities.

Libraries are more than just books; they are about people learning, growing and coming together as a community. It is fitting, then, that this year's theme is "The Power and the Beauty of the Word." It reminds us that in this fast-paced information age the word is one of the most basic units of conveying information. In its spoken, written or electronic form the word is fundamental to human culture and civilization. We'll be judged by future generations on the words we leave behind, something we should remember in this House.

As keepers, organizers and purveyors of the word in all its forms, libraries and librarians play a central role in the development of human culture. Today in Ontario, libraries are helping to shape the future by providing access to information in their community, in the nation and in the world.

Yesterday this government publicly recognized four libraries that exemplify the vital role libraries play in everyday living. The Peterborough, the Pickering, the Etobicoke and the North Bay public libraries received the 1996 Public Library Service Award for excellence and innovation.

I urge everyone to spread the word about Ontario's libraries, to continue using them and to join us in celebrating this marvellous community resource.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I think it's important for the people in Ontario to know that the family support plan is still in a state of absolute chaos. No matter what the Attorney General says about systems being up to date, it's a mess.

My constituents know that. We have parents, families, mothers and children who are not yet receiving their benefits, and it's very important that the people of Ontario know this has to be fixed. I have various constituents: Lise Versteegh, for one. Her money has been lost, they tell her — totally unacceptable. This is not good enough. It's got to be fixed.

I have a letter here from Geraldine Kakeaway, a Thunder Bay resident who has done everything to make sure things are done right. This is to the Attorney General. She writes:

"You are not fulfilling your obligations as a government agency. I fought hard to ensure that my daughter's father would meet his financial obligation to her and now this is not the case of a deadbeat parent but a 'deadbeat' bureaucracy that is failing to meet its mandate to children. You're backlogged I'm sure, but whatever reason my daughter's child support is lost somewhere and I am holding your agency responsible because in the chain of events, your link is where I see the failure has occurred. I am frustrated and very angry. Winter is on the way and my daughter needs warm clothing and I am relying on the child support" plan "to purchase what she needs for the upcoming cold season."

Minister, what are you doing about this situation? The minister cannot pretend the system is in good shape. It is not. It must be fixed, and the people of Ontario must fight to get this fixed.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Mr Speaker, I'd like to bring to your attention a situation in my riding in regard to a woman who is now on a waiting list to get medical services out of Mount Sinai Hospital. She has been, through her doctor and through specialists, trying to be referred into Mount Sinai and she's been accepted for surgery that is needed in order to correct a problem she is having.

1340

To her surprise, after being told that she was going to get this appointment some time in February without a real date being tied to it, she received a letter from the hospital that says:

"This year government funding to Mount Sinai Hospital has been reduced by \$18 million." This is even after the minister has said there has been no cuts to health care.

"Although this decrease poses an enormous challenge, we are determined to maintain the high quality of care." What's really of concern is the following comment in this letter. It says:

"In these challenging economic times, the ability of Mount Sinai Hospital to maintain its high standard of patient care and research is more dependent than ever on private funding."

This constituent from Timmins, prior to being admitted, is being asked to send a contribution to Mount Sinai Hospital because your government and the Minister of Health, Mr Wilson, has cut the health care budget in the province of Ontario, and this patient wonders: "If I send the dollars, does that mean to say I will be guaranteed a spot at Mount Sinai Hospital? If I don't send the dollars,

will I not get into Mount Sinai Hospital?" Is this the kind of health care you're talking about, where people are going to have to pay to get in? I'm very much afraid this is where this is leading to.

CANADIAN FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I would like to bring to your attention a special week dedicated to some very special people. This week we celebrate and promote foster families across Canada. Canadian Foster Family Week acknowledges the contributions of foster families and raises the awareness of the work they do in caring for the greatest resource we have, our children.

Foster families offer loving care and safe homes for children who are unable to live with their natural families. These special families fill a genuine need to provide for the emotional and physical wellbeing of these children.

The work of fostering is challenging, demanding, frustrating, enriching and rewarding. For many years, foster families have risen to those challenges and dedicated their time and energies into helping these children.

In Ontario we are fortunate to have more than 4,500 foster families who open their homes and their hearts to 20,000 foster children every year. I would like to congratulate the Canadian Foster Family Association for working so hard to organize this special week. Since 1989 they have dedicated the third week in October to recognize the contributions of foster families.

On behalf of the Ontario government, it is a privilege for me to congratulate foster parents and to thank them for the difference they have made in the lives of so many children.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I wanted to comment on the employment situation in Ontario. We all remember that Mike Harris ran on a platform of creating 725,000 jobs over the next five years. It was a very specific promise, and we now know that the government is falling far behind its objectives.

Yesterday we looked at the numbers. You promised by now there'd be 180,000 jobs created; you're now running 80,000 jobs behind. We find there are actually 57,000 more people out of work in the province of Ontario in September of this year than there was a year ago.

We have a serious employment problem in the province of Ontario. Even in the budget, the government itself is predicting that in 1998, three years after the new government got elected, there will be more people out of work in the province of Ontario than there was in 1995 — in other words, three years, well into the mandate, more people out of work in the province of Ontario.

We have a crisis in employment. Yesterday we asked the Premier to address it. He essentially said there is no problem. Don't worry about it. It's all solved. Well, we have a crisis in jobs: 57,000 more people out of work in the province of Ontario. It is time the government said, "Yes, we have a serious problem and, yes, we are not going to simply slough it off; we are going to tackle it." You are going to be held accountable for the increasing number of people out of work in the province of Ontario.

GORE PARK

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On Saturday October 19, 1996, one of our famed historians, Brian Henley, wrote in the *Hamilton Spectator*: "In all of downtown Hamilton, there is no spot more important as a reflection of the city's history, its growth and development and its potential for a strong rejuvenation than Gore Park and, especially, the Gore's landmark fountain."

On Saturday, hundreds of Hamiltonians gathered to rededicate the new fountain which is there to replace the one we lost in 1959, originally dedicated and installed in 1860, as part of our sesquicentennial celebrations, and many people deserve credit for that event.

First and foremost is Dennis Missett, who is the chairman of the fountain foundation but also came up with the original idea. Margaret Houghton is president of the Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society and played a key leadership role, as did former Hamilton Mayor Jack MacDonald and current Hamilton Mayor Bob Morrow. Ray Harris played a key role also as the past president of the Downtown Business Improvement Area; as well as Jude Johnson, our musical ambassador, who is there for every important event in Hamilton. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment band under the directorship of Mike Rehill played a key role, and all of it was excellently orchestrated by Bob Bratina, who was the master of ceremonies and is a well-known broadcaster at CHML radio station in Hamilton.

I urge all Hamiltonians and those who visit Hamilton to stop by Gore Park and see our beautiful new and old fountain.

RUTH REDMOND

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): August 1995 to August 1996, 99,000 net new jobs.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in this House and recognize today Miss Ruth Redmond of Niagara Falls, on receiving the Canadian Heritage Foundation's Gabrielle Leger Award for outstanding contribution to the preservation of heritage properties in my riding.

Ruth Redmond was born in 1902 in Holleford, now Hartington, Ontario, a community north of Kingston. In 1923 she graduated from Queen's University with an honours BA in English and history, and a year later she graduated from the Ontario College of Education in Toronto. From 1926 to 1967, Miss Redmond taught at Stamford Collegiate in Niagara Falls where she is fondly remembered by her former students, who continue to send her cards and telephone her, my parents and many of my aunts and uncles among those who remember her fondly.

Last Friday, Stamford Collegiate presented Miss Redmond with the Barbara Frum Award, named in honour of the late journalist, who also attended Stamford.

Between 1954 and 1987, Miss Redmond purchased five houses, including the former Fralick's Tavern, just north of Drummond Hill Cemeteries. These properties, known as the Redmond Heights, were at one time the site of the Battle of Lundy's Lane, one of the War of 1812's bloodiest battles. Situated at the highest point in Niagara Falls, the Redmond Heights provides a panoramic view of the city.

Last June, Miss Redmond dedicated the Redmond Heights to the city of Niagara Falls for the creation of a historic park. She believed she owed it to past, present and future generations of Canadians to see the site preserved for heritage purposes.

On behalf of the residents of my riding, I would like to thank Ruth Redmond for her generosity and stewardship and congratulate her on her extraordinary accomplishment.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO SECURITY
OF THE LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: My point of order relates to a report which will be forthcoming from Mr Justice Estey, now retired as justice but the author of the Estey report on matters related to this Legislature. It has been the practice, but not always a consistent practice, that there be a pre-release to the three parties so that there can be, I guess we call it a lockup of some kind, perhaps even an hour or so, so that we would have a chance to look at it so that there could be some reasonable comment made on it. I'm wondering if you are able to help us out in that regard at all, in your position as Speaker, if you are able to get us a lockup in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I've never heard of anything such as a fairly consistent practice, so that makes it difficult to rule on, to the member for St Catharines. No, I can do nothing to force the government to have a lockup on a commissioned report, so beyond that, there's nothing I can do except to ask the House leaders to get together and determine how to best handle the situation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health and also one for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): They are scheduled to be here, Mr Speaker, if it could be stood down.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Restart the clock? Thank you.

1350

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today I would like to raise for her the situation faced by many families close to her own riding in Durham. These families have adult children who are disabled and parents who are currently entering their seventies. They have been trying to arrange funding to ensure that their children's wellbeing can be preserved in the event that they, the parents, no longer can do this.

The concern and urgency of these parents is this: These children are developmentally disabled and they need supports for their safety and their wellbeing. Their

parents are aging. Without any supports, they are not going to be able to stay at home. They are going to end up in institutions, which is a move that your government and your ministry are discouraging.

Minister, if protecting services for the disabled is a priority of yours, I suggest that in your campaign literature —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Kennedy: If you've admitted there are not enough resources for the disabled, won't you acknowledge the increased demand and increase funding for these services for the disabled?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I agree that there are many families out there with aging parents who have taken the responsibility and have made sacrifices in their own life to care for their children at home. Quite right: There is a problem which we are seeking to address. As those parents age, what will happen with those children?

I have met with many members in my riding and many representatives of organizations who are fighting very hard to have funding and appropriate mechanisms in place, and we are quite interested in listening to their proposals and doing what we can do.

Mr Kennedy: The facts of the matter contradict what the minister was just saying. Minister, people have been talking to you, and it doesn't seem to matter whether we're talking about child care or health care or any form of care, because what people are getting back is no care.

Mr and Mrs Warren of Oshawa, Ontario, met with you in August 1995 to discuss the situation affecting their daughter Alison, who has Down syndrome and severe epilepsy. In case you've forgotten, Mr Warren is 70 years old and his wife is 66. They met with you to try to find solutions and determine how your government could help ensure their daughter's wellbeing. The Warrens have never asked for support before. The amount of money is less than what would be required if their daughter went into a group home.

Can you tell the Warrens why there has been no action in the last 14 months if, as you state today, you've been listening and you have this concern? Nothing has happened, and this situation is urgent.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'd be very pleased to have our ministry officials look into the specific details of this case to see the status of it and what is being done in terms of funding. I would also like to mention that I just had a call yesterday from a constituent of mine who had had \$40,000 more allocated for their particular circumstance, so we are able to make these decisions when we can as the funding is available.

The other thing I would like to mention to the honourable member is that one of the reasons it's so important to do the restructuring is to try and move the resources out of the institutions, where everyone agrees that's not always the appropriate place to care for such people. We need to move those resources into the community supports so that families can have those supports in the community, and that is indeed what we're trying to do with the downsizing of the facilities.

Mr Kennedy: The minister is only admitting the failure of her government in doing exactly what she just

said: 14 months and no response to this family. If your ministry feels they can ignore the problems and they'll go away — they tried to meet with the deputy minister, with the minister, yourself, and they've not even been dignified with a response.

These families are not alone. There are many families in the same situation. Without these supports, these children have only the choice of institutions, and yet your government is closing institutions and preaching about how there's going to be community-based care. Is that what the thousands of families and the thousands of children can look forward to when you start closing institutions? Is this indifference going to continue so that we're going to have a disastrous situation on the part of those families and children?

The Warrens want you to stop talking about putting money coming from restructuring and using the bureaucratic dodge to get around this. There are hundreds of names listed on this petition who want you to stop talking and to start doing something about families with severe disabilities so they can provide care to their children in their communities.

Minister, when will you realize that current funding is not enough to meet the needs and that your job in terms of providing money —

The Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Kennedy: — for the tax cut isn't good enough? When will the Warrens be able to get support so that their family can have some peace of mind and you don't end up putting their child in the institution as they wear down in the care and concern they're showing for their child?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I agree that the system must be changed to better support those families who are caring for disabled children or for disabled individuals themselves. That's one of the reasons we have such a high priority on trying to bring in the new income support program for the disabled: so that we can make sure they have funding that is protected and to make sure they have funding that will better suit their needs.

As I'd mentioned previously, I'd be more than pleased to have officials look into this individual circumstance to see if there is more that can be done for this very important family.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is to the Minister of Health. You and Ontario doctors have been meeting behind closed doors. It's important for people — the public, patients — for you to come to account now. There was a catastrophe of your making in terms of the way you've been dealing with the doctors. We know why they were there behind closed doors — they want to get rid of clawbacks and get their insurance paid for — but why you're there is something that bears explanation. We believe you're there because you want to protect the money your government needs for the tax cut. We understand your perspective. We heard about it in the newspaper last weekend, about how difficult it is to live on \$110,000 a year. The public out there must well understand the pain you're in.

My question for you, a serious question, is, who is speaking in these negotiations for the patients of Ontario, who were not represented? The joint release that came from the OMA and your government did not mention patients once. Who's looking out for them and how will we know that sick people are not going to be made to pay with their health and wellbeing for your political deal that you made behind closed doors with the doctors?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): If I get the gist of the question, I think it would be obvious to all members of the public, and certainly to members of this House, that patients come first. That's been the theme and the thrust of everything we've done as a government. A good patient-doctor relationship is also very important to the wellbeing and health of the population, and that's what our serious negotiations with the OMA have been all about. I'm hopeful that the doctors of this province will agree with the joint statement that's been agreed upon between the negotiating teams and that we'll move on to continue to provide what is indeed the world's best-quality medical care to the patients of Ontario.

Mr Kennedy: I'm sorry, but the minister is simply not convincing that he is looking after the interests of patients. We have a track record starting to develop that whenever you're involved patients are getting hurt. When you close hospitals, patients are hurt by that. When you fire nurses, as is happening in Peterborough and elsewhere in this province, patients get hurt. When you replace nurses with upgraded cafeteria workers because of the cuts you've made to hospitals, patients are getting hurt. This deal with the OMA has great potential to hurt patients.

Where will the \$88 million to \$100 million come from? You're going to find that to put on to doctors paycheques; you're going to take it away from somewhere else. You're going to take services that patients have now and make them pay for them out of their own pocket. It's what the OMA release said. It talked about delisting, about making services payable by the patients. Please tell us, when you talk about buzzwords like "modernization" and "delisting," don't you really mean that you're going to make patients pay for their own care? Are you letting your tax cut determine health policy in this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: I remind the honourable member that the government that's cut health care in this country is not the Mike Harris government, which has increased the budget, but his federal Liberal cousins, by \$2 billion. A phenomenal amount of money —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for St Catharines.

Hon Mr Wilson: — has been cut in terms of the transfers from the federal government in health and social services budgets to this province.

If the honourable member is suggesting that patients are being hurt today in our system, then he makes the case for change and he makes the case that the government's been making for numbers of months that the status quo is not an option. We've not actually done the restructuring yet, announcements are being made and frameworks are being put in place. But if patients are

being hurt today — and by the way, I want to know the patients who are being hurt because they're not to be hurt; they're to receive world-class services. If your contention is and you have evidence that patients are being hurt today, then you make the case better perhaps than I can that the status quo is not an option and things definitely need to change so that patients won't be hurt, gaps in services will be closed and money won't be spent on excessive administration, waste and duplication, and will be spent on patient services.

1400

Applause.

Mr Kennedy: We find in the applause coming from the other side of the House and the answer of the minister that they're prepared to ignore the consequences for patients arising from this deal. When the minister talks about dissatisfaction with the status quo, we know what his agenda is: This is a legacy being developed for Two-Tier Jim, for someone who's going to Americanize this system through the back door. We're talking about medical services that people have now, which this minister chose not to address in his response, not to talk about, services people are going to be made to pay for out of their own pockets. How is he going to keep quality care on that kind of basis?

Explain. This is your opportunity to gain the confidence of the people who are experiencing the cuts you've enacted in this system, for which you must take responsibility for once. What will you do to explain to them how user fees in their system are going to improve health care in Ontario, and what will you tell poor Ontarians when they have to make the choice between paying for their food or their clothing or their shelter or buying health care in the new Ontario that you in your capacity as health minister are making possible? Please answer the question.

Hon Mr Wilson: The efficiencies we're looking for in the system, if the member had read further, beyond his own speeches about the agreement, and actually read what the broader media are saying and the people of Ontario are saying — they know where the efficiencies are. Nurses know where the efficiencies can be found in the system; that's part of the whole campaign they've got now. We're listening to those people, we're listening to doctors and we're going to find those savings in the system.

I don't have to say anything about user fees, because user fees are illegal in this country and this government is not contemplating user fees.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Today, the Equal Pay Coalition released a leaked government document setting out your government's agenda to claw back pay equity increases from women all over the province. One of the women at the news conference, Kim Rudd, earns about \$23,000 as the director of three child care programs in Cobourg. Under pay equity, her work has been found to be equivalent to a man who makes more than twice her salary, but Kim Rudd says that under your proposed

legislation she would never get the equal pay that she is entitled to. Will you promise today that you won't make any legislative changes to pay equity law that will take equal pay away from Kim Rudd and other women in the province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I think we need to put this in the context of accuracy. The government has not introduced any legislation. There is not even a document circulating as to what the government may or may not do, because all we are presently doing is analysing the report that was prepared by Jean Read. We are committed to pay equity and we are committed to sustaining it in an efficient, affordable manner.

Mr Hampton: Mary Cornish and Ethel LaValley and others from the Equal Pay Coalition are here in the gallery today. They read your government's document. It's not something imaginary. They read it and they're quite alarmed by your government's document. Even that document says within its text that what you're thinking about will be highly contentious with women's groups and labour groups because it will mean real cuts to pay equity.

For our part, we all know this fits with your agenda. It fits very much with your agenda to drive down the wages of working people and middle-income people across the province to give your wealthy friends a tax break. Will you at least commit today that you will take this legislation off the fall agenda? Will you assure those women that you will take that legislation off the fall agenda and that anything you have been contemplating with respect to reductions to pay equity you will stop?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's very unfortunate that you have not taken a look at the document that appears to be circulating. If you had taken a look at the document, you would already have determined that the time lines and the information contained in that document are not accurate.

I will only indicate to you that we are very carefully analysing the report that was submitted by Jean Read, and we will endeavour to bring forward legislation that continues to respect the principle of pay equity and that will maintain pay equity in an affordable and a sustainable manner.

I add as well to the leader of the third party that if you take a look at the job creation that has occurred since our party formed the government, the majority are jobs that have gone to women.

Mr Hampton: I can't let that pass. Only a Conservative Minister of Labour would stand up and say that, after the province lost 35,000 jobs last month, many of them women. Only a Conservative Minister of Labour would stand up and say that when the province has 57,000 more people unemployed now than last year.

Look, you can spin it all you want. The fact is that your omnibus bill took away pay equity from about 100,000 women in the lowest-paying jobs. You capped pay equity raises in the broader public sector and you clawed back equal pay that had already been set. You eliminated funding for the Pay Equity Advocacy and Legal Services, which was set up specifically to ensure that pay equity issues were addressed. Come clean here. What people want to know is: Will you stop your attack on equal pay? Will you categorically say that there will

be no further legislation which will attack equal pay for women in this province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's obvious the leader of the third party has not heard anything that has been said. I will say one more time that our plan is to introduce legislation that is committed to the principle of pay equity; we will maintain it. However, I would indicate to you that, unlike your party which lost 10,000 jobs in five years, we have 99,000 new jobs in this province since we were elected and the majority of those jobs are for women.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr Hampton: I say again, only the Conservatives would cheer when the province loses 35,000 jobs in a month and mostly women are affected.

The Speaker: Your question is to?

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Health. Today hundreds of people are demonstrating outside your hospital closing commission and outside your office. They are there because of your broken promise with respect to health care. You said in the Common Sense Revolution you would not cut health care, but that is exactly what your government is doing. Yet you continue to say the health care budget has not been cut one penny.

We can read the health care estimates and we know what you're saying is not true. Why don't you just come out and admit to people that you are cutting the health care budget? That's why thousands of nurses are losing their jobs. That's why hospitals across the province are being cut. Why don't you just admit the truth that everybody knows?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It's slightly unparliamentary to suggest I'm not telling the truth. His party tried this during a whole two weeks of estimates and wasn't able to make the case on province-wide coverage. They cannot make the case that we've cut health care. It's gone up \$300 million. The auditor of Ontario will confirm that for you, if you don't believe the government members.

Secondly, talk about people who haven't got their facts right — on that side of the House. We put more money in pay equity than that government ever contemplated, half a billion dollars more in pay equity, and you have the gall to say what you just said in this House. Your credibility is nil with the people of Ontario, Mr Hampton.

Interjections.

1410

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Sudbury East, I ask you to withdraw the comments you made.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Mr Speaker, I withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker: The member for Riverdale as well. I ask you to withdraw —

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Mr Speaker, what did I say?

The Speaker: I don't need to repeat what you said.

Ms Churley: I'm sorry, but I don't remember —

The Speaker: I ask the member for Riverdale to withdraw her comments.

Ms Churley: I can't remember what I said, but if the Speaker thinks they were unparliamentary, I will withdraw them.

The Speaker: That's not even remotely close to an acceptable withdrawal. If you want me to repeat what you said, I can. The fact of the matter is, you know what was out of order; I ask you to withdraw it.

Ms Churley: I apologize for unparliamentary comments.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: We have again an exhibition of the government's strategy. When the family support plan is falling apart, the Attorney General stands up and denies it. When 100,000 women lose pay equity, the minister stands up and says, "I deny it." When the health budget has been cut, the Minister of Health continues to stand up and say, "No, it hasn't."

Minister, you're not fooling anyone. Your government has simply changed the accounting process you use. Your health care estimates have a page where you show that you've changed the method of accounting. When you factor all that out, the fact is that you've cut the health care budget by at least \$248 million.

Everybody in the province knows it. They know it by the number of nurses who are being laid off; they know it by the loss of health care services in their own community. Why don't you just come clean and stand up and say, "We cut the health care budget"? Your own estimates show that you cut it by \$248 million.

Hon Mr Wilson: I have explained this ad nauseam in estimates. They could not make the case in an all-party committee. I'll go to your office and give you a detailed explanation.

One of the major explanations, honourable member, would be that we're still recovering money from physicians that was an overpayment in previous years, therefore it's money that was not to be spent in previous years. Remember that we're still collecting, even after the agreement, the 2.9% social contract which they didn't pay during your time in office. It's due this year and next year from years past. That's showing up on the books as a recovery, which is bringing down the health care budget.

You told us at first that you weren't supposed to spend that. You can't have it both ways. You can't have imposed a social contract on this province, left the bills to be collected by a future government and then complain about the way the figures look in the books.

At the end of the day —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: — I can fully explain this. I have fully explained it. Health care is up \$300 million this year, and we've more than fulfilled our campaign promises.

Mr Hampton: I think that was a long-winded admission by the Minister of Health that the government has moved from a cash method of accounting to an accrual method. That's why they continue to insist that the health care budget hasn't been cut when it has.

The other reality we face is that to find some money to finance your phoney tax scheme, the Minister of

Finance now will have to cut a further \$3 billion. You're going to leak out close to \$6 billion a year in your phoney tax scheme, so the reality is that there have to be more cuts, and we know some of those cuts are going to happen in health care.

That means, of course, there will be a delisting of some services. People will have to pay out of their pockets for health care services that used to be covered by OHIP. It means more user fees and it means —

The Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Hampton: — moving to a system where in effect you have two-tiered access: Those who can afford it and have lots of money get more; those who can't afford it get less health care.

Minister, why don't you just come clean and admit to people that's what is happening across Ontario? That's what you're creating, that's what you want, and that's what's happening out there. Why don't you just admit it, because everybody can see it.

Hon Mr Wilson: The question is so ridiculous as to frankly be impossible to answer. Nobody would do what you dream up. The physicians aren't saying that; the nurses aren't saying that; no one is saying that. The fact of the matter is that we're moving towards exactly what the nursing association asked for, integrated delivery systems where people don't fall through the gaps, where we don't see 40% and 50% administrative costs on programs but we see dollars driven towards front-line patients. Soon we'll have made more investments in direct patient care than you did in your entire time in office.

By the way, Mr Speaker, because this is supposed to be a supplementary to the original question, I just want to remind members that when people read the financial books in this province in future years, those books, as the auditor said, are an honest set of books.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: The fact of the matter is that we've moved to an accounting system that the auditor of Ontario asked us to move towards, and the people of Ontario, for the first time in many, many years —

Mr Hampton: More user fees.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party, come to order. Answer.

Hon Mr Wilson: — have a true accounting of what's spent on health care and what the government is spending.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I have a question for the Solicitor General today. It's about the Tory deal with the devil that's going on here in debate today, and that is the expansion of video slots out of casinos in Ontario into every bar and restaurant, into every community across this province.

You have obstructed debate and discussion in committee and in this Legislature over this past year on this issue by suppressing pertinent police information for proper debate in this House. Your briefing note states, and you know this, that legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, but you didn't want to share

that information with the people of Ontario. What is driving you to ignore police advice in this province?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The statements made by the member opposite are completely inaccurate. Anyone who has been following this discussion knows that. I've indicated that we've had a range of views from policing authorities across this province, across this country. The Premier, I gather, read a note in the House yesterday from Paul Walter, the head of the Metro police association.

I have a comment here from a gentleman who is a former chief investigator of the US Senate anti-rackets subcommittee. His view on this is that —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Cochrane South, come to order, please.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You've got a lot of nerve.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, would you please come to order. Thank you. Can you sum up, please.

Hon Mr Runciman: Philip Manuel, a former chief investigator of the US Senate anti-rackets subcommittee: "I would say the province of Ontario is on the right track in eliminating illegal and unregulated traffic in VLT machines by establishing a system of licensing, control and taxation. Such a system can ensure that organized crime elements are kept out of the business, that corruption is addressed by active enforcement of licensing and procurement rules and revenue can be taxed and appropriately allocated to charitable, social or educational programs."

Mr Ramsay: How is it that I can get the American report from the Solicitor General but he won't give me the Ontario report? I just want the Ontario report.

I'll tell you, organized crime must be very happy with the new Robert Runciman, because they've got a man on the inside of the Harris government now with this Solicitor General.

The Speaker: Come on. Order, the member for Timiskaming. That is out of order. I don't think the accusation is at all parliamentary. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Ramsay: Speaker, I withdraw that. I would like to say to the minister that he knows his report says it's the responsibility of individual police forces to allocate resources to combat this problem. The report continues on to say there has not been any increase in resources in Ontario towards this problem in the last few years, and this minister is cutting back. How are Ontario police communities going to properly enforce our laws in Ontario against this gambling that you're bringing in?

The Speaker: Question.

1420

Mr Ramsay: Organized crime is coming into our communities because of you, Minister. When are you going to stop ignoring the police information, stop undermining what the police are saying in this province and start to do your job?

Hon Mr Runciman: The reality is that illegal machines have been prospering in this province under the

tenure of the former Liberal and NDP governments. We're going to be taking very active measures to eradicate illegal activities in the gambling area, much more active than the former governments did.

I want to indicate as well, as I've indicated on a number of occasions now, but the opposition do not want to listen to this, that it is not my report with respect to the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. It's an arm's-length organization. With respect to obstruction with the committee, the committee had every opportunity to call witnesses from the policing community, from the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, and did not call one witness to appear before the committee.

NATIVE ISSUES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Attorney General and the minister responsible for native affairs regarding the relations between this government and the Chippewa nations in Ontario, particularly in relation to recent decisions of the courts and even crown attorneys in the province who are acting for the Attorney General.

Yesterday, the government dropped most charges against aboriginal people charged in the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995. The government admitted that there was correspondence dated in 1937 between the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the then Ontario Department of Lands and Forests which supports "the reasonableness and honesty of the accuseds' beliefs" that there was a native burial ground in the park.

In light of this admission on the part of your representatives in the court, what is your response to the Chippewas' claim that there is aboriginal land as part of the Ipperwash Provincial Park, and are you now prepared, now the charges have been dropped against natives, to order an inquiry into the violence that led to the death of Dudley George?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The crown attorney withdrew charges on the basis of there being an honest belief by the accused persons with respect to the status of the lands in question. As a result of that, the crown attorney felt there was no reasonable or likely prospect of conviction and accordingly withdrew the charges on the basis of the legal defence of colour of right.

That is not a defence that conclusively proves in any way the status of the property, but it has always been the position of the government that we are anxious to determine the status of that property. We want to go in and begin an examination of that property. The occupiers have not permitted that. Our position has been clear. We have told Chief Bressette that if a burial ground exists we will take the necessary steps needed to protect it, and we're anxious to be able to follow up on that.

Mr Wildman: With regard to the relations between this government and the Chippewas in Ontario, the minister will know that certain members of the judiciary have indicated it would make more sense for this government to be prepared to negotiate agreements rather than litigate. Also, the minister will know that the courts have

recognized the Chippewas of Nawash's right to commercially fish around the Bruce Peninsula.

When is the government going to negotiate a new management agreement for the fishery to protect the rights of the aboriginals, the Chippewas of Nawash, and to ensure proper conservation of the fishery resource in Georgian Bay and the surrounding area?

Hon Mr Harnick: I am going to refer that supplementary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. He'd recall that when he was Minister of Natural Resources there was a lower court decision called the Fairgrieve decision which stated that the Chippewas of Saugeen and Nawash, along with the Saugeen nation, two first nations, had an allocation to commercially fish in the waters. Since that time, there has been over \$400,000 flowed to the first nations for pre-negotiations. The judge said: "You have an allocation. It's not an exclusive allocation, so work it out." That's what the Ontario government has been doing, in good faith. Over \$400,000 was flowed for pre-negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Over \$2 million has been spent on commercial buyouts to be in compliance with the law, as Judge Fairgrieve stated it.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Since last year I met in the fall with Chief Akiwenzie of the first nation. They requested another \$1.3 million of pre-negotiation money, \$600,000 of which would be spent for a communication directorate. What we've said, and this is important if you understand this case —

The Speaker: Time. I appreciate the importance, Minister, but again, all the questions and answers in here are important and they deserve the same amount of time. I must move on.

GREATER TORONTO AREA

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I have a question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. As a result of Fortune magazine's search for the best city in the world, Toronto has been designated number one. Some 100 cities were considered by this leading American business periodical but Toronto beat them all. London, Paris, Singapore and Hong Kong fell out. Vancouver, Montreal and Ottawa didn't even make the top five. Will the minister tell the House what the government has done to contribute to this success?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): This is very good news that we received today. I noticed that the article referred to Toronto being North America's safest city. It also talked about having an excellent transportation infrastructure, superb cultural and theatre facilities, a very fine ethnic diversity and a superior quality of life. It said it is very clean, green and comfortable. I think Toronto is a reflection of Ontario and what this government is doing at this time.

Mr Ford: Whether it be Etobicoke or North York, the editors have noted the ranking is a result of a significant

contribution by areas that make up the GTA. As a resident of Etobicoke for over 30 years, I am proud to have raised my family there, and I am pleased to —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Order, please.

Mr Ford: — raising their families in a great area.

Minister, what is your ministry going to do to ensure this profile remains high?

Hon Mr Saunderson: We intend to stay the course no matter who tries to disrupt it. We are going to hold to our objectives and continue to do what we have promised to do. We also note that National Geographic and the United Nations have looked at Toronto, Ontario and Canada and said these are very good places to live. I think, as citizens of this province and as residents of this city, we should be very proud of how people regard us outside our country. We're going to do everything in our power to make sure we deserve that recognition.

1430

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Chairman of Management Board. Last week I had the opportunity to raise a constituent's concern with your colleague the Minister of Health who, to my explaining how a 102-year-old constituent of mine was threatened with the discontinuation of her health benefits, said it was "bad customer service." I want to pursue the discussion about bad customer service being provided by the Ontario provincial government.

People all across Ontario are phoning for health cards, birth certificates, driver's licences, to name but three basic services their Ontario provincial government is supposed to provide. They are either getting thrown into voice mail hell or, more likely, they are put on a permanent merry-go-round of busy signals.

The question to the Chair of Management Board, who promised, on behalf of his pal Mike Harris, to deliver more efficient and more effective government: When is your government going to start answering the phone?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I'm happy to respond to the member opposite that we're working very hard in that direction. The goal of this government, as stated a number of times, is to deliver to the people of Ontario better services at lower cost.

I'm very delighted to have the opportunity to indicate, for example, that we have the Service Ontario concept out there whereby people in the province of Ontario will have the opportunity in the very near future — this concept is being implemented as we speak — to come to one centre and get all their needs identified, whether it is a driver's licence or a fishing licence or any other kind of support service they need from the province. It's being piloted at the present time and I expect it to be in force in the very near future.

Mr Conway: Taxpayers in Ontario don't care much about your promise for tomorrow; it's the reality and performance of today, and it's a mess. The telephone services being offered by the Ontario provincial government are a mess and they're getting worse.

I'll cite but one example: You can phone the Trillium drug plan, hundreds of people are, and that voice mail system you have over there will walk you through four or five different electronic processes and then it will hang up on you. That's happening today in Ontario.

I repeat, the basic services — birth certificates, drug cards, drug information, student assistance; the Ontario student assistance plan number is perpetually busy. It's either voice mail hell or a perpetual busy signal.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Conway: I repeat my question to you on behalf of real people across Ontario: When are you going to start answering the phone and delivering these services that people are paying for and expecting to get in Leaside, Pembroke and everywhere else in Ontario?

Hon David Johnson: It may be surprising, but I don't disagree with the member opposite. We have inherited a system which has been neglected for 10 years —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You're the government. If you can't do the job, step aside. We'll do it for you.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: This isn't popular to say, obviously, but yes, we did inherit a system, it does need investment, there was an NDP government for five years and a Liberal government for five years, the technology is out of date and the service isn't adequate to the people of Ontario. That's why we've made a commitment to improve it, invest in technology and focus the services, so that the people of Ontario can get the service they need at a cost they can afford.

We are working on that right now. Pilot projects are being implemented and it will soon be in place.

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): The government's in its second year of power and they still haven't figured out the phone system.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. This summer you closed the regional offices of the family support plan and you laid off 290 staff. Since then there are women and children all across the province who can't get their family support plan cheques. They don't get them any more. They used to get them.

I want to ask you about one particular case. Wendy Gatrell has been receiving regular support payments from family support for the past five years until this August. Then the Thunder Bay office of family support closed. Her husband continued to pay his support payments to the credit union in Kenora, as he's always done in the past, but the money didn't come through for her. By the end of August she still hadn't received any money. She called the family support plan. Nothing happened.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Hampton: She'd been off three months already for surgery. She had to go back to Thunder Bay in Septem-

ber for surgery again. Still no cheque from the family support plan. Finally, her husband had to pay her directly.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party, the question's been asked. Attorney General.

Mr Hampton: So I want to ask the minister —

The Speaker: No, leader of the third party. Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I've indicated, we have had long-standing problems with the family support plan. We are reorganizing —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): She was getting a cheque for five years, Charles. Take responsibility.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for Sudbury East, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Harnick: — the family support plan. We are going to give the plan tools to be sure that enforcement can take place, and I will tell you that we are hiring a new front-line staff who will be able to answer questions and respond to people immediately. That hiring is now taking place and —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Windsor-Sandwich, come to order. Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Ms Lankin: Maybe you should have left the original offices open.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order. I'm warning you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: And the member for Cochrane South, come to order, please, too. I'm warning you as well. Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: This family support plan has been a source of difficulty for years and years and no one did anything about it. We are now reorganizing the plan.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Harnick: The plan will provide better service and it will be able to enforce orders that come to the plan.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for London Centre.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, we were told by the minister responsible for women's issues to bring the cases to you here. These are all cases where people were receiving their funds. It has nothing to do with chronic problems. This is the service reduction for a period of time that was predicted in your own business plan.

So we have another one: Lori Siska, mother of three children in the London area. She has only received \$300 out of the thousand that's owed to her, and she depends on that \$730 to meet her bills. She's been informed by the FSP staff that her problems resulted from the closing of the regional offices. She was told that employers of payors didn't know where to send the money. She was also told that there was never a computer glitch and it was a total fabrication that workers are getting tired of having to pursue. She's behind in her payments. She's over \$150 in service charges. She's lost her ability to contribute to her RRSP.

The Speaker: I need a question.

Mrs Boyd: What are you going to say to Lori and her children? This is your problem. This is not a chronic problem. You created it.

Hon Mr Harnick: I am not going to respond to an individual case. As I've indicated to members, if they have those individual cases I will be pleased to look into them. What I can say is that we are reorganizing the plan and when the plan is reorganized, and we're very close to opening the centralized office, this plan will —

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Tax cut on the backs of the women and children.

Ms Lankin: Women and children are going without money and you're standing here and you're not telling the truth at all. You haven't told the truth in this place. Absolutely —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for Sudbury East. New question, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine, I'm going to name you if you keep it up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I caution the member for Beaches-Woodbine. There are no more warnings.

1440

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It has come to my attention that the northern caucus recently met in Timmins to discuss northern issues and concerns. Could the minister update the House on the result of that meeting?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): It's a pleasure to inform the House that we had a very fruitful discussion last Friday in Timmins. It was a non-partisan meeting open to all members, provincial and federal, that represent northern ridings. It was well attended by the federal parties and by the government members.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party and Sudbury East.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We discussed issues that are vitally important to the lives of families in northern Ontario.

Mr Grimmett: Mr Minister, I understand that the meeting was not as well attended as the last northern caucus. Could the minister advise the Legislature as to the reason for this?

Hon Mr Hodgson: It was well attended by the federal members and the government side. Unfortunately, the opposition parties from the provincial Legislature chose not to attend. It's a decision that —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Okay, minister of natural resources.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Premier, the finance minister, my parliamentary assistant, Mr Murdoch, were there.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane North, come to order.

Hon Mr Hodgson: It's at meetings like this that we get input on the concerns that are vital to northern Ontario, and I'd also like to point out to the members opposite that the invitation —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I can't hear the minister. The member for Sudbury, the member for Lake Nipigon, come to order, please. I'm having a great deal of difficulty —

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'd be tempted to ask you to withdraw, but I don't know what you said, actually. We'll leave it. I think we'd better quit while we're ahead. You've got 20 seconds. You've done fine. New question.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Madam Minister, the Ministry of Labour chest clinic, occupational health and safety branch, will be shutting down and no other government ministry or board will take the responsibility for fulfilling the function of this clinic. This clinic processes, develops and, as you know, evaluates the X-ray films that are sent to them from about 174,000 workers who work where asbestos and silica may be present in the workplace.

You have made the decision to close the clinic. Three years ago the clinic had 26 people on staff in Toronto to handle the workload. Today only three handle all X-rays of workers who may be exposed to asbestos and silica in the workplace. Presently there are about 2,000 films still to be processed from the workers who may have been exposed to a dangerous working environment. While the three remaining staff can process the film, the radiologist that evaluates them is no longer employed by this branch, and no one working there can read the films to inform the workers if a problem be detected.

Madam Minister, what provisions have you made for these 2,000 existing X-rays of workers that may have been exposed to asbestos and silica to have their X-rays read and for what action to be taken on the problem cases?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Yes, we certainly share the concerns that all of the reading that needs to be done is going to take place. As you know, there's going to be cooperation between the clinic and the WCB in order that we can assure that all of that information will be properly dealt with and communicated.

Mr Curling: Thank you for that response. There are 2,000 films still yet to be processed. While you're having this consultation, people's lives, people's health are at risk, and they have not made provisions. You knew you were going to close those clinics down. Why didn't you then make provision for those X-ray films to be read so that these people's lives, these people's health and safety could be protected, and furthermore those that are being X-rayed today to have their lives protected and their environment be a safe place to work in?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the member opposite, I want to indicate to you again that we certainly share your concern

for the individuals who have had the X-rays done. We are doing everything possible to ensure that there will continue to be consistent interpretation and communication of the results to the individuals concerned. We have procedures in place that will ensure that indeed will happen.

NATIVE EDUCATION

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training, but I see he's absent, so I'll go to the Attorney General.

A town in my riding, Fort Albany, had a residential school since 1908 up until the late 1960s. The school is in bad shape. In all the daily newspapers over the last couple of weeks, we've seen chiefs and elders who have come forward and said they were abused in the school; they were beaten up. There have been suicides there. The crown attorneys are planning on charges being processed.

My question is, when is the Conservative government prepared to make sure that there's money available to build a new school? One of the problems is —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Len Wood: — that the school is there. It was used as a torture chamber and the kids were abused from the age of five and six years old. The grandparents and the parents are still seeing their young children attend this school. What they need is a new school. I'm wondering when you're going to make money available to build a new school in Fort Albany.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'm going to refer this to the Minister of Education and Training.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): As I'm sure the honourable member opposite knows and we've discussed in this chamber many times, this government is currently undergoing a review of capital construction of schools. It's our intention to provide for the needs of our school people in Ontario, and we will be making a report on how we'll do that in the very near future.

Mr Len Wood: As a supplementary, there's no doubt that they need a new school. It would be easy to be able to take a helicopter and lift the school up and drop it in the ocean.

But the other concern is that there's a healing process that's going to have to take place, even if there are charges and convictions in court or whatever. Is the minister prepared to make money available for a healing process that is going to have to take place all along the James Bay coast and the Hudson Bay area, where children were brought in there at an early age from 1908 to the 1960s? They need a healing process. When is the minister going to make money available for this process?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, the question that related to the capital side I believe I've answered by saying once again in this chamber that we are reviewing those options and we'll have a better package for that. We intend to meet the needs of students across the province, including the students in remote communities. We intend to meet those. Whatever suggestions there are that come forward to us we'll review quite seriously. We will provide for

the legitimate needs of those students who live particularly in those rural and isolated communities in Ontario.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question today is to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Minister, last week the federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Honourable Stéphane Dion, gave a speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. In it, Dion said that the federal government will make gradual changes to the federation. Could you explain to the House the changes Ontario wishes to see in this regard?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): In response to the question from the member for Durham East, I'd just like to say that I think all Canadians were sort of impressed and encouraged by the remarks that Mr Dion made in Washington. There are several key areas where Ontario believes there is need for changes and gradual changes in the federal-provincial responsibilities.

At the annual premiers' conference that we know occurred in Jasper in August, a ministerial council was formed once again on social policy. The premiers established this and we're working together across all provinces with the exception of Quebec, but the territories are involved. We're looking at common approaches for social policy areas. We look forward to discussing these with the federal government in a cooperative and results-oriented manner.

1450

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to point out that in his accolades to Toronto this afternoon the member for Etobicoke-Humber said that Ottawa wasn't even on the list. I was surprised that the government members from Ottawa didn't stand up and say what a great world-class city Ottawa really is.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): That's not a point of order.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final

report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by thousands of workers from the United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 175, on behalf of their brothers and sisters, totalling 38,000 members here in Ontario. It's forwarded to me by their president, Mike Fraser; the secretary-treasurer, Wayne Hanley; and the coordinator of benefits, Herb MacDonald. The petition reads as follows:

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We therefore demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeal structure with worker representation and that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I add my name to those UFCW Local 175 members.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition that I'm pleased to read this afternoon.

"Petition to the government of Ontario with regard to the closing of the Ontario Agricultural Museum:

"To honourable member:

"Please consider this request from your constituents, the members of the Solina Women's Institute, a local branch of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada.

"We are very upset that your government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, declared its intention to stop funding the development and exhibition of the Ontario agricultural heritage museum, a distinct benefit to future generations of young Canadians, rural and urban.

"We are aware of the Ontario Rural Heritage Preservation Committee, ORHPC, and their goal. Our membership lauds and supports their purpose and initiative. This non-profit organization demonstrates the true spirit of rural Ontario that appears to be denied by your government.

"Our feeling is the government of Ontario must recognize our concern for the future and provide some funding to assist ORHPC in its endeavour by entering into a transfer process of this facility and an independent operation with interim funding agreements for three to

five years, an acknowledgement that Ontario needs and deserves a continued heritage facility and exposition, an endorsement of the faith, energy and vision of our forefathers.

"We urgently ask that you consider this request and carry it forward to your minister and to your government.

"E. Jean Taylor, President

"Solina Women's Institute."

I am pleased to affix my name in support of heritage Ontario and our agricultural history.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm happy to present the following petition. It's another 1,500 names to add to the approximately 7,000 names that have signed this petition already.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury hospitals."

I affix my name to the petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

This petition is from, it looks like, about 100 people in my riding, and I will affix my signature to this petition.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed C-68, An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control, and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearm smuggling and trafficking, and a ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms, or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the street and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I have signed this petition.

PROTECTION OF TEMAGAMI

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly which reads:

"We, the undersigned citizens of the province of Ontario, insist on an immediate end to both the logging and prospecting in Temagami. The reasons for this demand are numerous, obvious, and can only be debated during a period of zero logging. You don't shoot first and ask questions later. The same goes for mineral prospecting.

"Temagami is precious for us, our children and our children's children. If the animals of the forest could speak, the roar would be deafening so even you, our elected officials, could hear."

I have about 60 signatures and I attach my name as well.

1500

ST MARY'S GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition here signed by 51,537 individuals from Kitchener.

"To the Legislative Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to help us to save St Mary's General Hospital."

I will affix my signature.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Rose Kulimouski and Mae Mussolum are still hard at it, and I have petitions that they have been circulating, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, with regard to health care, and it concludes by saying:

"We, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to restore the \$1.3 billion that was cut on November 29, 1995, in order to maintain the promise made by this government to protect health care funding and not cut health care, to reaffirm this government's commitment to no new user fees and to ensure that the health care budget will stand at \$17.4 billion for every day of the life of this government."

In support, I affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have a petition to deliver today on behalf of the member for Don Mills. It's a petition entitled A Petition to End the Spring Bear Hunt, addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 70% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows, and it's very timely:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut

income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature, as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): "Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the current rate of unemployment in the construction industry in the Ottawa-Carleton region is at a record level of 48%;

"Whereas Ontario-based construction workers and contractors encounter a great many regulations that effectively prohibit them from working in Quebec while construction workers and contractors based in Quebec encounter no such restrictions in Ontario;

"Whereas negotiations over the last number of years between various governments from Ontario and Quebec that were dedicated to eliminating barriers to labour mobility have failed to level the playing field for Ontario and Quebec workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the proposed Construction Workforce from Quebec Act tabled by Jean-Marc Lalonde, MPP for

Prescott and Russell, on June 4, 1996, to protect Ontario workers and contractors in the construction industry be adopted."

I'll also affix my signature.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act to satisfy the criteria for contribution by the Government of Canada set out in the Canada Health Act / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé pour satisfaire aux critères régissant les contributions du gouvernement du Canada et énoncés dans la Loi canadienne sur la santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you wish to make any brief statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): The bill amends the Health Insurance Act so that the Ontario health insurance plan satisfies the criteria set out in the Canada Health Act and the province of Ontario qualifies for receiving the full cash contribution from the government of Canada described in that act. Those criteria are public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility.

As a part of achieving the objective, the bill prohibits the Lieutenant Governor in Council from making regulations that would disqualify the province of Ontario under the Canada Health Act for contribution by the government of Canada, because the Ontario health insurance plan would no longer satisfy the criteria under that act.

This bill is designed to protect our health care system from that government —

The Deputy Speaker: No debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALCOHOL, GAMING AND CHARITY FUNDING PUBLIC INTEREST ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 RÉGISSANT LES ALCOOLS, LES JEUX ET LE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE DANS L'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to liquor and gaming / Projet de loi 75, Loi réglementant les alcools et les jeux dans l'intérêt public, prévoyant le financement des organismes de bienfaisance grâce à la gestion responsable des loteries vidéo et modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait aux alcools et aux jeux.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'm quite pleased to have the opportunity to do the lead here at third reading on behalf of our party. Our critic is Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, who has done an admirable job of trying to point out to the government some of the problems in moving forward with this particular legislation. I believe that Mr Kormos, as a former minister responsible for this issue and as a member of this Legislature for some years, has brought those points forward well. He's been quite eloquent in his presentations both here in the House and in committee, and also in the greater general interest in regard to what happens in a community across Ontario. I will try to touch on some of the points Mr Kormos has made, but more specifically I would like to comment first of all on a couple of concerns I have as to how I see this bill affecting the people of Cochrane South.

As I always say in this Legislature, it is always important for members to come to this House remembering, yes, they have a party affiliation — and in my case it's as a New Democrat — but also that we have a responsibility to bring forward the views of the people of our constituency, whatever those views might be, and try to do the best we can to make sure their voice is heard here at Queen's Park, something that doesn't always happen.

1510

One of my primary concerns at the local level is one that many constituents in my riding have raised with me, not only since this bill has been introduced by the Conservative government of Mike Harris, but also that people have raised with me over the years as a government member in regard to charitable gaming as an issue broadly. Simply put, there are not a lot of dollars out there. There are many people in our communities who are out there fund-raising in order to have the dollars to do everything from providing for sports organizations to social organizations, such as the United Way, who are trying to meet a social need, and also fund-raising around the whole question of culture.

One thing we know, and it's a fact, since the mid-1980s Ontario has undergone, as has Canada, a tremendous change in our economy and we have seen many good-paying jobs in our communities go down the sewer because of policies like free trade and NAFTA. With that has come less money in our communities. We are seeing today, at least in Timmins and I'm sure members in this assembly can talk about the same kind of experiences, where employers in Timmins such as Pamorex, which used to employ some 1,400 employees at one point — its parent company called Royal Oak is lucky with staff to probably employ somewhere in the neighbourhood of 350 people. We see companies like Abitibi, in Iroquois Falls, which had larger numbers of employees than they have today.

What it means for the communities and how it relates to this bill is that there are less people in our communities with good-paying jobs. With less good-paying jobs, two things happen: The first thing is that there are less dollars to go around in regard to the taxation role of the government in regard to income tax. Secondly, there is less disposable income on the part of people in those ridings to be able to give to charity.

One of the concerns I have with this bill is how it deals with charitable gaming. Because of what we're seeing today, massive cuts on the part of the province as it relates — I've seen Minister Mushinski stand in this House on numerous occasions, as you have, and talk with pride about the reduction in expenditures that she is doing in her ministry to fund organizations such as sports organizations, recreational organizations or cultural organizations. She says this is good stuff, this is something she needs to do, and she's always proud to point to the private sector and citizens in those communities who will come in and fill the void. At the same time as she's saying that the minister responsible for gambling in this province, Mr Tsubouchi, is coming forward with a bill that was first introduced by Mr Sterling but now he is the carrier of that bill, that is going to be competing directly in that market of trying to raise dollars in the charitable gaming industry.

At this point, and let's be clear about this, in our communities across Ontario there is gambling that happens in the charitable gaming industry. That's when the Nevada dealer comes to our community and sets up a casino night at the Senator Hotel or the Ramada or wherever it might be in our community, and people go and gamble. That is a regulated business. But what happens is that the dollars raised through that, the profit made through the gambling, goes directly back to our local communities to support different charitable organizations. One of the things the government is doing in this bill is put the long arm of the finance minister in that pot — pardon the pun — and they're going to be taking out of the community dollars that would normally go, through charitable gaming, to local organizations. They will go directly back into the hands of the finance minister of Ontario.

There is in that a contradiction on the part of the government. The government says, "We are removing ourselves from the responsibility of funding organizations in communities that support activities like sports events, cultural events etc, and we are going to leave that responsibility in the hands of the community and we're going to ask charitable organizations and we're going to ask business to come in and to fill that void." But at the same time they're doing that, you've got the minister responsible for gambling in Ontario saying, "Anything that happens in gambling in the community in regard to charitable gaming, I'm taking 50% out of the profits." There's a big contradiction here. You can't have it both ways. You can't have the government of Ontario say, "We want to encourage the community," and in the same breath introduce a bill that discourages a community.

That's indicative of many things we see this government doing. What really bothers me is that the government doesn't seem to have, and I know they don't, a real strategy about how to deal with all of these issues. This government since coming to power has been a government that's driven by ideology, and I understand that. That's fine. Governments of all stripes are driven by ideology. Where I part company with the government is that they forget they have an ideological principle they have to deliver on, but it has to be tempered against the reality of what they find in the community and across this province.

This government is moving ahead on a number of initiatives, such as we're seeing in Bill 75, without any concerted effort, as far as planning is concerned, across the corporate view of what this government has to do. It doesn't look at gambling as an issue as it relates to the rest of Ontario from a social point of view, on a question of what happens in regard to policing, what happens to addiction, what happens to revenue. No, what they're doing is taking off with it as an issue itself, because the government has to raise dollars to be able to pay for its tax break.

That's a big problem. Most people in this province, I think, are somewhat conservative in nature, if not in politics, and I think most people would say, "Listen, we're prepared to give the government a break," and to a certain extent we see that with the government sitting at some 40% or 42% in the polls, but where you see the erosion is that people are starting to understand that this government doesn't have a strategy.

We're seeing it certainly in Bill 75, in regard to a lack of strategy. There is no clear strategy. You have, on the one hand, a government that says, "We're going to cut funding to charitable organizations and communities," and on the other hand they're going and taking the money away from those same charitable organizations.

How does that set up any kind of strategy? It sounds like a cash grab on the one side and an offloading on the other, both of which are harmful for the people in between and the people who are affected.

You see that across most of what this government's doing. In health care, it's a bit the same thing. It's a bit like VLTs in the sense that the Minister of Health goes to the slot machine one day and pulls the handle down, and all of a sudden he comes up with cut, cut, cut, and then he knows what he has to do. The next day he comes back in and pulls the slot machine handle another time and it says, "This time it's not a cut; this time we're going to attack nurses," or whatever. It's a funny kind of way to run a government.

The member for Welland-Thorold has coined a phrase well, and it's a phrase that a lot of people in Ontario have heard over and over again by the member for Welland-Thorold, when he calls VLTs what they are: They're slot machines, the crack cocaine of the industry.

The reality is that the government can try to put a good face on this as much as it wishes. The government tries to pretend that this is a sort of aesthetic move on the part of the government when it comes to gambling, that they're VLTs, you know, not a big deal. It's a VLT. It almost sounds like bacon, lettuce and tomato, for God's sake, but it's not as plain as that.

It's a slot machine, and it's a slot machine that is going to be delivered into every community in Ontario, into every neighbourhood, into every bar and into as many restaurants as people can get them into, because there will be a very strong temptation on the part of the restaurant and hotel industry across this province to bring these machines into their local establishments. Why? Because if you're Mr Morris sitting in Matheson and you're tempted not to bring in a VLT because you don't believe in it, but your competitor down the street has one, what do you think Mr Morris in Matheson is going to do

at the Standard Hotel? What's he going to do? He's going to have to bring them in. If you're Mr Reid at Casey's Restaurant, or you're whoever it might be at whatever restaurant, and your competitor out there brings one in, you're going to have to bring one in as well, because the reality is that these things are addictive, the same addiction that has been shown in other provinces.

You're not going to be able to stop the proliferation of VLTs once you've introduced them. As soon as you get into the business of introducing one VLT establishment in a community — let's call it for what it is; I shouldn't call them VLTs. Once you introduce a slot machine into a community, that slot machine is going to go many places. It's not going to be just in one location. You're going to see restaurant establishment after hotel establishment coming before the commission saying: "I need to compete. I cannot compete unless I get a slot machine in my establishment because all my customers are now going to my competitor."

Business being what it is, it has to compete. You have to compete on a level playing field, and the government is going to basically allow, through this process, over a period of time — not initially; I don't argue this is going to happen the minute slot machines are allowed into the province, not at all. It will be a fairly slow progress at first, but once you get them into the community, I'll tell you, I can see it coming now, they're going to be at my constituency office door knocking at the door come Friday morning, every Friday when I'm in the riding to do constituency appointments, and you're going to see the owners of those establishments saying, "So-and-so down the street has one, and I don't."

1520

It's the same thing as what we saw happen with lottery tickets. With lottery tickets there were a lot of people who tried to resist the temptation to bring them in, because small business people are no different than anybody else. There are people who agree with gambling and there are people who disagree with gambling in that business.

A lot of people I know in my community were opposed to bringing lottery tickets into their establishments because that's not what they believe in, either because of a principled position because of their religious belief or just based on who they are and what they believe in. What happened time and time again, and I saw it being a member of the government and a member in opposition, is they would come and knock at the door and say, "Listen, I've been resisting bringing these things in, but I have seen a decrease in business."

I was talking to one woman in Schumacher — I'm trying to remember her last name — a German woman who runs the corner store in Schumacher at First Avenue and Birch, I think it is; I forget the name of the street. She has talked to me about the differences in revenue that she has and customers coming in with and without lottery machines and tickets. It's come to the point that, if I remember correctly, and I hope I'm right here, she said that 40% of her business is the sale of lottery tickets. That's a big part of anybody's business. Why does she do that? It's not because she likes selling lottery tickets. It's because if you don't do that, people aren't going to come

into your store, because they can buy their lottery ticket down the street. So if you want to sell a loaf of bread, you want to sell a pint of milk, you want to sell a pack of cigarettes or whatever it might be, you offer the sale of those lottery tickets.

Slot machines are the same thing. You put them in one hotel in the city of Timmins or Iroquois Falls or Matheson and everybody's going to want to have one to compete with their competitors. You put it in one restaurant, it'll be across every other restaurant in the community. With that comes a problem.

I want to put for the record that I am not opposed to gambling. That is not the point of what I'm saying here. I think gambling in a controlled environment is not a bad thing. We see many people in the community of Timmins, as we do across the province of Ontario, who at one point used to travel to Las Vegas and Atlantic City to participate at a casino as a method of enjoying themselves on a holiday. We now see that happening in Ontario because our government allowed the introduction, the pilot project, of a casino in Windsor and another one, Casino Rama, in Orillia, as a method of being able to divert some of those dollars into the community and back into Ontario. I think gambling in itself is not a bad thing. But if you allow gambling casinos to be set up in every community and you allow slot machines to be set up in every community, there is really a danger that people are going to start utilizing these things more and more, to the point that it will become a problem.

I want to quote some of the things that people have said in regard to this whole point of how people are now more driven to gambling with the introduction of slot machines at every corner. The scenario is that if you've got slot machines all over, there's a stronger temptation to do it.

I want to read a quote from a psychologist from Brandon University, Barbara Gfellner, who makes the following point in a report that she had done. I will find that; it's right here. I've got a numbering system here and I got my numbering system wrong. Here's the quote. Psychologist Barbara Gfellner of Brandon University has concluded — this is out of a report she had done — that "more people gamble when opportunities to gamble are more readily available. Thus, the accessibility of VLTs places more people at risk for gambling addiction and for some this will include involvement in criminal behaviour."

She's saying herself in her report, as a result of the work that she has done, somebody who has studied this, because in Manitoba slot machines are allowed and they're now seeing the effects of that, that she has seen far more people going to the slot machine and spending their hard-earned dollars on those slot machines because they become nearer.

I say again, do I have a problem with gambling? No. I've stopped at Casino Rama a couple of times and spent a couple of hundred dollars. I never go there to make money, because I know that's not what it's set up for. But the point is, I've gone there twice since it's been open. If that thing is next door to me, my temptation is that much larger. I will go more often.

That's what I'm trying to speak to on the slot machines. It is difficult enough to introduce a casino in Orillia or to introduce a casino in Windsor. We know there is some relationship to what happens in the local community. In Windsor we found that over 90% of people who have gone to that casino are from the United States, with about 10% of the customers coming from Canada. By and large in casinos, from what I have observed, at least at Casino Rama — I can't speak for Windsor because I haven't gone to that establishment — most of the people who tend to go to Casino Rama are fairly well-to-do. But there are people in those casinos — if you'd been there, you would have seen it — who look as if they're spending their last dollar. That's difficult enough to deal with, and I accept the responsibility for that as a member of the government that introduced casino gambling. Would I still vote for it? Yes, because I don't think it in itself is a bad idea; it becomes a question of how you deal with it. But I say again, it becomes a real problem when you allow these things into every community, because what you end up with is a very, very strong temptation for people to go into those casinos.

I'll read another quote. This is from a profile of VLT gamblers, written by Barbara Gfellner, that basically says the same thing. This is an interesting comment: "VLT players indicated that their expenditures on gambling had increased since VLTs became available and they spent more money on VLTs than any other form of gambling." This is her study, where she's gone out and talked to people in the community. They're saying that you go in the first time and you might say: "I'm going to limit myself to \$10," if you're a person with not a lot of income. "I'm not going to spend any more than \$10 in a slot machine." The first time you go, you spend \$10, and maybe you lose, so you say: "Well, I wasn't very smart. I didn't have the system figured out. Next time, I'm going to spend another \$10 and I'll be a little bit smarter about how I play." Don't ask me how you do that on a slot machine. There's no system. You just put the money in and hope you win; most of the time you lose.

Anyway, you go the second time, is what she's saying, and you still lose the \$10. Or maybe you make \$10. And you say: "Well, look at that, I spent \$10 and I came out with \$20. I'm going to go back again and I'll do it the next time." So you spend a little more money. Every time you go back to the slot machine, you're that much more likely to spend more money, because after a while it becomes an addiction. That's what it is.

I've experienced it myself. I walked into the casino the first time with a good friend of mine from Kapuskasing who happens to be sitting not too far from me. On our first trip to that casino — it was the first time I'd ever gone into a casino — I said to myself, "I'm going to limit myself to \$100." I went in and I spent the \$100. I didn't leave until it was all gone. About a month later, I went back with a good friend of mine, Marcel Chartrand from South Porcupine. We stopped on the way down and I said, "I'm going to limit myself to \$100." Well, guess what I did? I spent the \$100 and then I said, "I've got some money on my Cash Stop card, so maybe I'm going to take a little bit more," so I spent another \$100.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): You're addicted.

Mr Bisson: Maybe I am addicted. Who knows? The point is that what the good professor in Brandon, Manitoba, is saying is that every time you go back, you're more tempted to spend more. That's what will happen as you allow slot machines into communities, and then when you allow more slot machines to go in, because there'll be a greater demand, you're going to have more and more people spending more and more of their hard-earned dollars in slot machines.

That brings us to a simple question: Do we, as a society, want to get the revenue we need to run our hospitals, our schools, our infrastructure, from gambling, or do we want to do it through taxation?

We chose, as a government, that part of our revenue could come from gambling. I look over at my honourable friend from Riverdale, my good friend Marilyn Churley, who was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and I would say a very good minister. We said: "No, we will stop it at casinos. We will allow a casino to be established, along with the one in Rama," the second one being for the native community. "We will look at the results of what happens with the casino."

I remember it well. There were people in the province, including a lot of people in Windsor — I wouldn't say a majority, but many of them — who had real concerns. We said, "Okay, we hear you." Marilyn Churley, the then minister, I think did her job admirably. She said: "I'm going to go to cabinet and I'm going to say one site in Windsor, one site in Orillia. That's it. No more. We will allow that to go forward, we will see what happens, we will study the impact of what happens with the casinos, and we will not move forward, we will do nothing, until we see the results of that."

But you know what Marilyn Churley did? She did one thing extra: She said no to slot machines. Well, she did many things, but the one thing she did particular to this bill is that she said no to slot machines, along with Bob Rae and the rest of the cabinet of Ontario under the NDP government. Why? It's very simple.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order. There are too many conversations. You drown out the speech of the honourable member for Cochrane South, and it's not correct. Let's make sure that you keep your conversations as low as possible.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was fine with that, but I think it shows that, unfortunately, the government members don't listen a heck of a lot when it comes to these issues. I think that's why we find ourselves where we are.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Hey, listen, I make the observation. You're the guys that are doing this.

1530

Anyway, the point I'm getting at is that Marilyn Churley, the then minister responsible under the NDP government said no to slot machines. Why did she say no? It was quite simple: she recognized, along with the rest of the cabinet and our caucus, including the backbenchers, because our backbenchers played an important role in our caucus, something that doesn't happen to the Tories too often — but we had said no. Why? Because

all of the studies, all of the reports we had read had said what? I ask my friend Marilyn Churley. They said: "No, don't do it. It doesn't make a lot of sense. You'll make some money, but here are the problems associated with it: There will be an increase in addiction to gambling, and there will be an opening for organized crime to get involved in the gaming industry in this province like we've never seen before." There were too many problems associated with it, and we said no.

Listen, I've got people in my riding who got mad at me because we had said no, because there are some people out there who do support the idea of slot machines. But I had no problem going to my community and saying, "Listen, we're saying no on the basis of the studies, on the basis of the report, on the basis of all the facts that have been brought forward to this point on this issue."

We looked at what happened to other provinces, we didn't do that in isolation, the same way we looked at what happened in other provinces around casinos. We said that, on balance, casinos can be managed. It's one geographical area that you're able to regulate, you're able to manage, you're able to deal with. There are problems associated with it, but by and large it's okay.

But when it comes to slot machines, the NDP government said, "No, we're not going to do it, because we don't want to make money through slot machines, which would be basically taking the money out of the pockets of people who could least afford it," because that's what the studies have shown. By and large, people who can afford to gamble will get on a plane or drive in a car and they will go and do that in a casino. The people who can't afford to get away too far are the ones who will spend their money in those particular slot machines, and that becomes a real problem.

I'd like to read another quote about what people have to say about the whole question of what happens with the increased use of gambling as a result of introducing slot machines in our communities. I would read here a quote. It comes out of the *Globe and Mail*, dated May 11, 1996. This is from Dr Howard Schaffer of the Harvard Medical School. He says the following: "Not only would there be a substantial increase in gambling, but many would probably turn to illegal gambling eventually because the payoffs are always higher."

This guy is an expert on gambling, and what he's saying is that there is going to be an increase in the amount of gambling that goes on in the province, and it will deal also with an opening for the people in the crime industry, as it's called by this government, to deal with it. I would like to come back to that point a little bit later. But the point I'm making is that Dr Schaffer, who happens to know something about this, is saying, "No, don't do it." We listened to him; we said, "No, we're not going to do it."

Another quote, and this is an interesting one. I saved this one for last because I've got great respect for the individual who made this statement. I think this man certainly at the time seemed to know what he was talking about. He doesn't seem to know what he's talking about at this point, but that's another point. This is a quote out of *Hansard*, dated May 13, 1993. It reads as follows:

"As Donald Trump says, 'Gaming doesn't come cheap.' I have to agree with a lot of the critics on that. It brings crime, it brings prostitution, it brings a lot of the things that maybe areas didn't have before. There is a big cost to pay."

Who said that? Mike Harris. It's really interesting how the perceptions and how the actions of the Premier have changed from the date he entered into government from opposition.

Another quote I have is from another distinguished colleague of our Legislature. Maybe the Solicitor General would like to listen to this one. It reads as follows:

"It's like prohibition" — and I think this is an interesting point — "I don't think we're going to be able to stop it, so we're going to try to get a handle on it and control it as best we can."

Who said that? Again, it was Michael Harris.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Was that Mike Harris again?

Mr Bisson: Mike Harris again.

The point I'm making here is that the government members themselves have indicated through their comments that they have the same concern I have, the member for Cochrane South, and the NDP has, which is that there is a huge incentive — not incentive; that's not the right word — there is a huge want on the part of people to gamble more and more, with increased usage of slot machines in the province of Ontario.

I want to pass to the other issue which is tied to that. I've got an issue note here. For people who are watching at home, an issue note is something a minister gets in his briefing binder in coming to the House, and it deals —

Ms Churley: Or hers.

Mr Bisson: Thank you for correcting me; or hers, because ministers of the crown — at any rate.

Ms Churley: There are a few of them over there.

Mr Bisson: There are a few over there; not as many as there use to be before, but that's another point for another debate.

Anyway, it's an issue note and issue notes are written by the ministry. It's written by the people who answer to the minister and it says what the issues are of the day, so that if there's a question asked in the House, the minister opens the issue book and takes a look at it and says, "Ah, I'm being asked a question on X," and they're able to go there and see what the relevant points are and what the studies were and what goes on etc.

This one is a current issue note. It's titled "Illegal Gambling" and it's for the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services and it's dated March 18, 1996. This is interesting. This is March 18, I repeat, 1996. In it is a note and it talks about some work that's been done by the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. That's CISO, which is the people of the OPP who are responsible for monitoring what happens in the gambling industry, especially as it relates to organized crime. There are a whole bunch of points made here that I think are quite interesting that I'd like to share with you on the question of slot machines.

The first one I'll start with, not in any particular order, is that there's a summary here of what — let me back up and explain this a little bit better. This is the briefing note

the Solicitor General would have had in his possession explaining what CISO had done in regard to its report on illegal gambling. All right? So the minister had this in his briefing note, the same minister who said he's never seen this, never saw the report, never read the report. My Lord, they sound like a broken record over there.

Here are some of the points that are made by this particular police organization:

"The analysis shows that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there is a potential abuse in the legal gaming sector. Although the amount of legalized gambling has increased over the years, regulations, investigation and enforcement has remained relatively stagnant. Legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased with interest."

Remember that the government is saying they want to do this because they want to put in check illegal gambling. The minister's own briefing notes from the Ontario Provincial Police say that's not so. The reality is that it'll increase the interest in gambling and people will not only go use the government's slot machines, they're going to go use the slot machines that are being run by organized crime.

This is the interesting point. Members of this assembly have been listening to the Solicitor General for the past weeks, almost months, talk about how he never knew about this report. One of the things it says is: "It has been known for years that illegal gambling is controlled by" — who? — "organized crime and revenues generated are used to support their illegal activities. The two major gambling activities are sports bookmaking and video gambling machines. Annually they earn about \$1 billion and \$500 million respectively."

The point I'm making here is that the Solicitor General himself, the minister responsible for the policing issues in this province, has stood in this Legislature over and over again saying, "I haven't seen the report, I haven't read the report, I didn't know about the report, nobody told me about it," over and over again, and had this in his briefing book. I don't want to be provocative here, but either the minister doesn't read what's in his binder, which is a possibility — ministers have been known to do that, at which point I would say maybe the minister shouldn't be the minister — or quite frankly, he has read the binder and —

Mr Len Wood: He sits there with his feet up on the desk.

Mr Bisson: That's another point. But either he has read the binder and chooses not to be forthcoming with the contents of it when asked a question — and the Legislature and the rules here do not permit me to say that the minister lies because that would not be parliamentary, but the point I'm making is, which is it? Does the minister not read his briefing book and thus should not be the minister? I would say that's the case because I think the actions of the Solicitor General over the last year have indicated he quite frankly does not have control of his ministry. Either things happen in that ministry such as we've seen in London-Middlesex and others, which are out of the minister's control, or that ministry's gone awry and the minister doesn't have control of it.

The Solicitor General smirks a bit at that, but that's the reality. I remember the Bob Runciman of opposition. Do

we remember Bob Runciman. My Lord, he would blow a gasket at the least drop of a hat. Anything that happened at the Solicitor General's office, he would go after my friend David Christopherson and Mr Farnan and Allan Pilkey on a regular basis. He would go over the top at every occasion. If the least thing would happen, he would go over the top. He's been, I would say, less than diligent on this one.

1540

What's interesting about this report as it relates to Bill 75 is that it was requested — by whom? — Duncan Brown. Let's see who Duncan Brown is, because it comes back to our friend the minister responsible for gambling in this province. He too has said he knew nothing of the report. "I did not see the report, I did not read the report and I did not know about the report," according to the stories of the minister responsible for gambling. Duncan Brown, the executive director of gambling, requested this report way back when. Why? Because it became a public issue through the London Free Press. Who is Duncan Brown? He's the executive director of gambling. Who is his boss in the end? It's the minister responsible for gambling, the Honourable David Tsubouchi, that's who it is.

There seems to be a bit of a link here. Does the minister responsible for gambling not have a handle on his ministry, that things happen in his ministry and nobody tells him because they figure he can't comprehend or he's not able to deal with them, or does the minister choose not to be forthcoming with facts as we ask for them? I can't say in this House that the minister would lie, because that would be unparliamentary, and I understand that. I'm not saying that for one second.

The Deputy Speaker: You're playing with fire, as simple as that.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for trying to bring me back and make sure I don't say those unparliamentary things. I'm trying, as best as I can, not to provoke the government. But when the minister responsible for gambling and the minister responsible to the police are asked the question, they're not forthcoming with answers they know or they don't know what's going on in their ministries, either of which is not acceptable in the British parliamentary system, and I would say in most governments.

I come back to the point. They can dance around this as much as they want. The point is that fact after fact after fact has said —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: What's that from my minister friend?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): You can do it without music.

Mr Bisson: With music.

Fact after fact has indicated that in the end all the studies show that if you allow slot machines to be introduced in the community, you will have a proliferation of slot machines within the gambling industry as regulated by the government, by the minister for gambling, and by organized crime. That is what is going to happen.

I would like to read from a submission. I don't want to call it a report because that's not what it is; that wouldn't

be fair. It's a submission by Mr Mowry, who is the clerk of the city of Sudbury, to the standing committee on administration of justice in regard to Bill 75. I think there's something of interest here that needs to be shared today. One of the things he says is:

"The issue of organized crime related to this type of gambling and the supply of gambling machines has been an ongoing concern. Substantiated information was that the supply and manufacture of these machines was closely connected to organized crime."

This is not me saying this. This is everybody who is involved in the industry. This is out of one particular report.

He went on to say, in his conclusion to his submission to the standing committee:

"The issue of slot machine, one-armed bandit and poker machine gambling has long been known to be associated with organized crime. In recent years confirmed intelligence reports have linked video lottery gambling and the purchasing of the devices to organized crime."

This raises the point that it's not only a question of organized crime being involved in the sense of operating slot machines. Merchants who may want to bring slot machines into their establishments will be approached by organized crime — we know that's what happens; it's what this report says — and offered a slot machine, I would imagine, for a lesser price than you would normally find it in the market, for a share of the revenue that organized crime would get from that slot machine.

He's saying in the conclusion of this report that not only would organized crime be involved in running slot machines but also in really trying to push the sale of the machines themselves to local merchants. A businessperson, being a businessperson, will try to figure out, "Which way can I do this for the least amount of cost for the highest amount of revenue?" If they can't get a legal one, they will get an illegal one and hope they don't get caught.

It goes on to say:

"Information has confirmed that the machines were manufactured in the United States by businesses owned by organized crime families, then shipped to Canada and sold to crime figures here.

"With due respect to the provincial government of the day" — talking about the Conservative government of Mike Harris — "it is necessary to report that Mr Brian Steves, manager of the New Brunswick Lotteries Commission for the province of New Brunswick, has advised that since the proclamation of the New Brunswick Lotteries Act, an extensive investigation is conducted on suppliers of video gambling devices by the Atlantic Lottery Corp. The investigation is directed to ensure there is no criminal element involved in the sale or manufacture of devices utilized in the province of New Brunswick. This issue remains topical for police."

What he's saying here is that the New Brunswick police have grave concerns in the work they've done in looking at how these machines come on to the market.

"Having had an opportunity to study the video gambling issue and attend locations of play, the author has made a number of observations. The norm appears that

most players are of the lower, middle-class portion of society."

This comes back to the point that I made earlier — and I'm glad that the minister for gambling is here — that there's a difference between the clientele who frequent a casino and the clientele who frequent a local pub and happen to use a slot machine. If somebody goes to a casino, it normally means they've got to spend a certain amount of money to get there, because if you're going to Orillia or Windsor and you live in Timmins or Toronto, wherever it might be, there's a certain expenditure to get there in the first place. That means it's not easy for people to get there.

The point I guess he's making in his report is that people who frequent gambling institutions like casinos tend to be mostly people who can afford it. Not all — I don't argue it's all because I've been there, seen it — but the vast majority of people there are people who have a few extra dollars, somebody like myself or my wife who says: "We're going to go down. We're going to spend \$100 each." We're not there to make money; we're there to spend it. If we come out winners, that's a bonus, but I've never seen too many people come out of casinos making a dollar, even in Ontario. The reality is that you go there and you spend the money; you don't get the money back.

What he's saying is that slot machines tend to attract a different group of people. It's not the person who says: "I've got \$100 or \$200 or \$300 to spend. I want to go spend it in a casino. If I make, bully; if not, it's just a bit of a holiday." It's people who say: "I'm sitting at home. I'm looking at my \$15 in my change purse. I'm looking at my piggy bank. I've got \$20. Boy, would it ever be nice to have \$40 because if I had \$40 maybe I can pay my phone bill on time this month." So they take their \$15 or \$20, they walk down to the local pub and then they put their last \$15 or \$20 into the machine, hoping to heck they will get back a huge return on that investment. But the reality is that more times than not you lose.

This is not a plug for Casino Rama because they're probably going to ban me from that place after I say the following: I had an opportunity, like I say, a few weeks ago to stop in at Casino Rama. Marcel Chartrand and myself were walking around the casino. We decided, after having lost my first \$100, that we would have a beer and walk around the slot machines to see the winners and the losers. I was surprised at how few winners there were. I expected that the odds would be fairly high so that you keep people coming back with increased wins. But the reality is that as I walked around and watched what people were doing over a period of a couple of hours and talked to them. The vast majority of people lost. There were a few winners but there were far more losers than there were winners. You can bear that out by the revenue that the province of Ontario and the native community will get out of casinos every day. The reality is that most people lose on those machines.

A casino's a different bailiwick. You go there, you spend your money and you don't expect to win. I don't think a lot of people go there for that reason.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Did you win?

Mr Bisson: No, I don't win. I never go to a casino — I've only gone twice in my life — to win money. I've learned something in gambling, because I'm a bit of poker player myself. A former member of this assembly, Mr Pope, and I have been known to play a couple of games of the game of cards called chance. But the reality is that those people who lose in gambling are the people who can least afford it. I found when I didn't have money and was going to the poker table to try to make a couple of dollars, seven out of eight times I would lose. But when I had money and said, "I'm just going there to have a good time; I've got \$100; win or lose, I'm out of there," I tended to win a heck of a lot more often. I probably won five or six times out of eight. The point I'm making is, those who can least afford to lose are the biggest losers in this.

1550

I believe, because I have to believe this, there are a number of backbenchers in this government who themselves have a concern about this. The Speaker got up a little while ago and he asked the members to come to order because there was some discussion going on, but I've noted through this debate that a lot of the members have been quite attentively listening to what I've been saying. I'm not going to use names because I don't think that's fair, but I think it says something: that they share some of the views that I and others have expressed on this.

Mr Len Wood: They know they can't get re-elected.

Mr Bisson: Well, that's for another debate, but the point is that they share that view. They are worried. They're truly worried that allowing the slot machine into the corner bar down the street is going to be a problem. You know why, Mr Speaker? Members of the assembly don't just come here and debate bills. We go back into our communities and we get to know the people. People come and see us with their problems. If you want to know what's going on in a community, go talk to your local MPP. They're pretty well in the know about what's going on and they have a pretty good sense of what's happening across the entire community because they meet people from all classes of life — from the person who has nothing to the person who has everything.

I think — I know. I'm not going to say "I think"; I know that members in the government in the back bench are having problems with this. But like all other government bills, the minister for gambling and the Minister of Finance have gone to the cabinet table, have sold this as a way to raise some dollars, and they've gone to the back bench and said: "You're going to vote for this. If you don't vote for this, you're not going to get the parliamentary assistant position or you're not going to get the cabinet promotion or you're not going to get the juicy little plums that you get every now and then that are in government."

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): That's the way it works.

Mr Bisson: Well, listen, it does work that way.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): How come you never made it?

Mr Bisson: That's the point. The Minister of Agriculture asks why I never made it to cabinet. It was exactly for that. Although I was a firm supporter of my government, there were a number of issues — a few of them — that I could not support, Sunday shopping being one of them, and I, in the end, said I would not support it.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I'm not perfect. Listen, I ain't going to argue for one second that the member for Cochrane South always gets it right, because nobody can claim that, and I'm not going to argue for one second that my halo is bigger than yours, Minister of Agriculture. That's not the point. I think you know as well as I do, because you've been around this House long enough, longer than I, that the ministers and the cabinet go to the caucus meeting and they say: "Thou shalt vote for thy government legislation or else you're out of here. You will either be a member of caucus or you will not get the plums."

That's a real problem; that is a problem with this House. This is not indicative of just the Conservative government. It's happened to Liberals, it's happened to Tories and, I would say, to a lesser extent with our government. I think that's one of the reasons we got into a lot of trouble: We had a lot of good members who at times had those arguments in caucus and in open. But that's for another debate.

The point I'm getting at is that I think it's incumbent upon backbenchers to bring the views of their community, because I'll tell you, when our Minister of Finance came to our caucus and introduced the idea of bringing the casinos into Ontario, we had huge debates in our caucus. There were members of our caucus, like Mr Drainville and others, who were deadly opposed to it and staked their political careers on that issue. In the end there was a vote of caucus and the caucus, by majority, decided to support it based on the arguments. I'm just saying that —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): No VLTs.

Mr Bisson: No VLTs, as the NDP House leader says. One of the provisions of that was that there would be no VLTs, and that it would be a pilot project. The point I'm making is that it was a collective decision of our government. It wasn't just the cabinet; it was the back bench that also went in and had that discussion, had the debate, and in the end we decided to do what we did.

I would suspect — and I not only suspect, I know that's not what happened with the government, because this Harris government is all about power being around the Premier's office. I know the member for St Catharines will say something on that in his two-minute response because I've heard this comment from him before. The power is around the Premier. The Premier decides what goes on, along with a few key people in his cabinet he trusts, and the rest of you have to follow.

I think that's sad. This is not meant as a swipe at Mike Harris. Mike Harris is the Premier. He's the person the people of Ontario have chosen and I need to respect that, and I do. But you have a responsibility as government members, as members of this assembly, to bring those views forward, not only to your caucus but to this House.

I will say one thing. When we had —

Mr Wildman: He said there'd be a referendum.

Mr Bisson: He said there'd be referendums, which I will come to in a second. But I will say this: When we had the debate on gambling and casinos in this Legislature by the NDP government, there were NDP members of the government who stood up and spoke in opposition to it because we weren't worried about backbenchers expressing their views. I remember people like the member for Welland-Thorold, people like the member for — Reverend Drainville; I'm trying to remember the riding.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): Victoria-Haliburton.

Mr Bisson: Victoria-Haliburton, and others who got up and spoke and had the conviction of speaking their views and the views of their constituents, other members of the NDP government who were in support at least at the time to be able to read some of the letters of people in opposition to give them a fair hearing in this Legislature, because as New Democrats we believed it was important to represent those views. I haven't seen that once in any bill and I haven't seen it in this one, and I think that's a sad state of affairs for democracy in Ontario.

I come back to the point that the government needs to in the end listen to what the people of the province are saying, and I would say in the majority most people are opposed to this and the government should think it through.

What does this government stand to make with casinos? Because this is what this is all about; let's not kid ourselves. I remember the Premier got up and he made a comment back last year and he said something along the lines of: "What we have is a spending problem. We don't have a revenue problem. Our only problem is we're spending too much. We have enough money coming in. We have to worry about expenditures." But the reality is that this is all about getting Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance, to get his hands on cash that he needs to try to balance his budget and pay for his tax cut. That's what this is all about.

We know that in the first year of operation of slot machines in communities we're going to see at the minimum \$60 million of money being diverted out of the pockets of hardworking men and women through slot machines into the coffers of the province of Ontario. We know that in the second year that is probably going to increase to somewhere around \$260 million, according to studies we've seen. Probably it's going to go up higher, because the experience in other provinces has been that. It's been a fairly good cash cow for the nine governments in Canada, with this government, that have introduced slot machines in their communities. And that's what this is all about. It's not about an ideological principle that you think gambling is something you can control and do whatever; it's simply a cash grab. That's what it is. The government should be clear on that. It has to do with nothing other than that.

I come back to the point I made originally, that this is going to hurt our local communities when it comes to fund-raising, because you all know as members of this Legislature, because you're approached every week when

you go to your riding, or however often you go, by people coming to you and saying: "Would you buy my raffle ticket, would you give a donation to my organization?" or whatever. You're asked all the time because people figure that MPPs have deep pockets. Some of us do, some of us don't, but they all figure we have a lot of money. So they come and see us every time they go to an event or they see us at the shopping mall or they see us wherever we might be, and they ask us for that donation. I always take time and I would imagine other members of the assembly do the same. I say: "How are ticket sales? Martha, tell me, how are ticket sales today?" Because Martha is one of the people I know who sells tickets for the church all the time. And she says, "You know, Gilles, it's really getting tough out there. It's really getting tough to sell tickets."

I went into the IGA, I think it was last Sunday, with my wife to do a bit of shopping before coming down to Toronto. I, as usual, got an opportunity to meet quite a few people and one of the people I met was Martha, who was selling tickets at the IGA. She was selling tickets on a quilt that she and other women had put together and had fabricated to donate to the church so they can sell tickets so that the church can have some money to do much-needed renovations. Martha said, "I sat here all day yesterday and I sat here today, and for every 10 people who came in I was lucky if I got one to buy a ticket." She was a bit discouraged out of that, because she pointed out that in the past, prior to what's happening in the economy etc, it was a lot easier to sell tickets; they would sell to far more people.

One of the things Martha said about selling tickets was: "One of the reasons it's getting difficult is because the government has cut funding to many of the organizations who used to be supported by government grants: sports organizations, cultural organizations etc. They are now out there fund-raising to try to offset the reduction and cuts they've got. So where we never used to get government funding and we had a hard enough time trying to raise the dollars, it was always a chore, none the less we used to be able to achieve our goals and sometimes we'd surpass them. Now it's getting difficult. We targeted that we wanted to raise \$2,000 through the sale of this ticket and another event to do what they needed to do with the church. I am very much afraid we're not going to get there."

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I would say, why is that? It's because there are only so many dollars to go around. As I walk into the IGA or the Canadian Tire, to the local mall, or the Main Street Café in Iroquois Falls, wherever it might be, people only have a certain amount of money in their pockets. If you're asked to buy a ticket once, you might buy. If you're asked to buy a ticket twice, you might buy a second one. But when you're asked virtually everywhere you go, you come to the point and you say: "Whoa, I'm not going to give to anybody. Everywhere I go I'm being asked for a ticket, so why should I give?" People are getting much more cautious about spending those dollars, not because the work these people are doing isn't good — it's good work — but because there's such a proliferation of people selling tickets.

One thing I took great offence at was the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Honourable — "honourable" is a loose term — Marilyn Mushinski who got up in this House and with pride talked about how it was crazy to be spending money on groups that supported activities such as bowling, archery or whatever it might be.

I know groups in my community who got a little bit of government money, a whole bunch, probably about \$800 to \$1,200 a year — people like the CNIB who use that money to provide dollars to blind people so they can go out and have an outing. Without that money, they would not be able to have the physical means to get people to that location to do it. She stood up with pride and talked about how this was crazy, spending this kind of money. But as a result of that — never mind what happens immediately. The result of cutting those dollars means all of these organizations are out there competing to get dollars from fund-raising.

Sports organizations — one of the groups that is most heavily affected by what Marilyn Mushinski is doing in the cuts to grants to sports organizations — are out there in spades now trying to sell tickets and do everything they can to raise dollars. They probably have more ability than the local church to sell tickets because they have all kinds of energetic young hockey players and soccer players or baseball players, whatever it might be, who go out on Saturday morning, who blanket all of the malls in our community to sell a ticket on some item that they're raffling to raise dollars. Of course, they need the money. That's not the point. The point is these people didn't do it to the amount that they do it now. Why? Because the dollars are being cut. That competes with other people who never used to get government funding.

What you're doing, in my view, is knocking out the block from under the wheels of people who never used to get government support by doing this. Introducing VLTs into Ontario and allowing slot machines to go into every part of our community I think in the end is going to make that even more and more difficult, much more difficult.

One of the things the government has not agreed to do, which I think is a bit of a travesty — we're saying, if you're going to do this: we don't want you to do it; we'll vote against it — but if you are going to do it, at least divert some of the dollars to crime prevention and to addiction because we know from the report that was done by the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario that there is going to be an increase in the activities of organized crime. That's just the fact. That is not me saying it, that is the OPP. We know from the reports that have been done in other jurisdictions, like Manitoba and others who have slot machines at every corner, or almost every corner, that organized crime increases its activity in that sector. We're saying at the very least what the government can do is increase the dollars towards policing to deal with the issues of organized crime within gambling. The government is not doing that and I think that's deplorable.

This is something I'll bet a lot of backbenchers don't know. How many people do you think are employed by the OPP whose job it is to deal with gambling and to

deal with organized crime in gambling? Take a guess. Four. Four in the province of Ontario in a population of 11 million.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It should be 400.

Mr Bisson: That's how many people we've got doing it. The member for St Catharines says 400. We probably will need 400 pretty soon, if we don't need them now.

We're saying to you, if you're going to do this, if you're heck-bent on doing this and you're going to move forward and you're going to put slot machines in every corner, in bars and restaurants across this province, the least the Solicitor General can do is go to the cabinet table and say to the minister for gambling in this province, "We want you to divert a percentage of the revenue from gambling into my police budgets so that we're able to effectively deal with the question of organized crime." I don't think that's too hard to do. I think that's a pretty reasonable request. But has the government done that? No. And the government says it's a government of common sense. There's nothing common sense about this, this is about a cash grab. That's what the government's doing.

On that point, in regard to policing, I just want to make a couple of points here, quotes from a couple of different people we might be interested in hearing from. I ask my colleagues in the Legislature, who said this? This is dated October 6, 1992:

"Wouldn't it make more sense from a sound management point of view, something we haven't seen very much of" — they're talking about the NDP government at this point — "to do the social projections and economic studies before you announce the casino?" They were talking about when we did Windsor. "Second, in the absence of having done that, when can we expect to see the economic and social projections and results of those impact studies, even though you've already made the announcement?"

Here is a person calling for impact studies and studies of all types in order to deal with the introduction of a casino, who said that's what should happen before we do this. Who said that? That was Mike Harris.

Where are the impact studies? Where are the studies the government has looked at to look at the effects of what gambling is going to do to the people of this province? Where are they? They're nowhere to be seen. Why? Because the government already knows the answer, as we do. It's going to be a problem.

When one of the government's own arms, the OPP, goes out and does a study and a report and comes back and says that it will increase involvement of organized crime, it will increase the usage of slot machines in Ontario, the Solicitor General and the minister for gambling, Mr Tsubouchi, say, "I know nothing; I see nothing; I hear nothing. Don't want to know nothing about the report. Haven't read the report, haven't seen the report, don't want to hear about the report," even though it's in their briefing books.

I say again, either they don't read what's in their reports, they don't read what comes across their desks, which means they shouldn't be there and are incompetent and are not doing their jobs, and I say that clearly, or

quite frankly they are not answering questions when questions are posed to them of a specific nature. That's as close as I can get to what I'd like to call them without being unparliamentary. So I say to the government, that is interesting.

Anyway, back to the first point with regard to diverting dollars of gambling into the OPP. When the government of Ontario, the NDP government back in the early 1990s, put in place a casino in Windsor, Mr Harris had this to say in the House on June 22, 1993. "Every officer and every policing dollar that goes towards casino crime or that kind of criminal activity is a dollar that is taken away from fighting the crime that currently exists on our streets."

What happened to the Premier since 1993? The Premier had very specific views about gambling. In fact, the member from Nipigon — the member from Nipigon? I wish the Premier was from Nipigon. The member for Nipissing, the Honourable Michael Harris, is the one who said, "You're going to have to have a referendum," if ever a casino was introduced in the province of Ontario. Wouldn't let it happen otherwise. Why? Because he read what was going on. He had positioned himself that way, number one, but number two, he recognized there was some concern.

How could you allow gambling to happen in every community across Ontario without a referendum even? Not that I'm a big fan of referendums. I think there's a problem with that, but if that's the stated position of your party, let's look at this just a second.

Mr Harris said, as the leader of the third party back in 1992-93, that if any more gambling was to be allowed in the province of Ontario, there should be a referendum. He in fact called for a referendum in the community of Windsor before we introduced the casino. That was the stated position of the Conservative Party.

The Conservative Party becomes the government on June 8, 1995, and in the fall and summer of 1996 they introduce a discussion paper that talks about referendum law. Under the Fewer Politicians Act and associated with that they are bringing forward a recommendation that we utilize referendums to decide issues of public policy such as this. We know that Mr Harris and the Conservatives wanted a referendum extending gambling in Ontario back in 1992-93. They are now introducing legislation that deals with gambling where you're not going to have a casino in Windsor; you're literally going to have slot machines in every corner bar across the communities of Ontario. Within time, that is what is going to happen.

This is being down how? No consultation, no referendum. I don't see anything of that. The government just moves forward. Why? Because they've got a cash problem. They have a problem where they're saying they must balance the budget over four years and they're giving people a tax break, so they need more revenue. So they're putting casinos literally in every community in the province of Ontario by allowing slot machines to be introduced into those communities without a thought about what it means to the communities that they are going to be in. I say to the government: That's wrong. That's not what you were elected to do. You're elected to govern for a period of four to five years and to make

decisions on behalf of the people of this province as a majority government, and you're supposed to do that in somewhat of a balanced way. I haven't seen that happen up to now.

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You might be sitting at 42% in the polls, but I would just remind the Conservative members, a year into our mandate, we were at 68% in the polls, and you know what happened at the end. Don't sit back at 42% of the polls and think for a second that that thing is going to hold for the next three years, because reality is there hasn't been a government over the last 10 years in the province of Ontario that has managed to hold that kind of support. I think generally on other issues that may be another debate we'll be able to get into, but don't sit back and just say, "Listen, we've been elected, we're sitting at 42% in the polls, so therefore it gives us the right to do this." Don't delude yourself into believing that — I see the Minister of Agriculture shaking his head as he agrees that's the case — because I think you have to be tempered, and so does the whip. I'm glad to see that Mr Turnbull, my good friend, agrees with that. I remember a day that the whip actually voted with me on a bill when we were in government. I couldn't believe it.

The point I'm saying is that if the government is going to move forward with this, it should at least take the recommendation that our critic has made and our caucus has made and divert some of those dollars made in the slot machines in those communities into policing so that we're in a position to deal with some of those issues in regard to what's going to happen to organized crime.

I would like at this point to read part of a report that I talked about a little bit earlier. It's not a report; it's a submission by Thom M. Mowry. He's a city clerk for the city of Sudbury. He made this submission to the standing committee on administration of justice. He went on to say — I think this is interesting, and I was making the point — that gambling in the city of Fredericton has taken on a new dimension with video lottery gambling. This is of interest. I think people should listen to this:

"Gambling in the city of Fredericton has taken on a new dimension with video lottery gambling. Prior to December 1991 the act was illegal and therefore a policing issue. Today gambling is a societal problem, with many citizens being injured. The Fredericton Police Force are greatly concerned for the quality of life of the citizens of Fredericton and believe that video lottery gambling is detrimental to that cause."

That's I think a comment that is quite interesting in regard to what's happening.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Point of order, Mr Speaker: We do not have a quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please verify if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane North — Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: The member for Cochrane North would like to participate in the debate, but at this point I have the floor.

As I was saying prior to the quorum call, and I'll just say again as we have the new members here at this particular point, just so that members know, this is a submission by Thom M. Mowry, the city clerk of the city of Sudbury, who made this to the standing committee on administration of justice. There are a number of points in here that are interesting, because what he's doing is he's looking at what has happened in New Brunswick and basically bringing that information as it relates to what happened when slot machines were introduced in New Brunswick back here to Ontario. I'm sure the member for Welland-Thorold, who's going to be here tomorrow, is going to speak more in detail about that, because that's something that I've heard him talk about a number of times, the honourable Mr Kormos. It goes on to say:

"Gambling in the city of Fredericton has taken on a new dimension with video lottery gambling. Prior to December 1991 the act was illegal and therefore a policing issue. Today gambling is a societal problem, with many citizens being injured. The Fredericton Police Force are greatly concerned for the quality of life of the citizens of Fredericton and believe" — what? — "that video lottery gambling is detrimental to that cause."

I've got to come back: Who is the government listening to on this one? Are they listening to Mr Kormos, the critic from the New Democratic Party who has brought all of these points forward at second reading, has brought all of the points forward at the committee level? Have you listened to Mr Kormos at other occasions? No. Have you listened to the public or to the Liberal critic on these particular issues who have raised the same points as Mr Kormos? The answer is no. Have you listened to your own officials within the ministry of gambling who are answerable to the minister of gambling and the Solicitor General, who have raised concerns in regard to gambling through the use of slot machines? No.

Why do I know those concerns exist? Because we were the government. Our own officials had come to us and said, "Don't do this," and we said, "We're not going to do it because we accept there's a problem."

Are they listening to the many citizens in the province of Ontario who have gone before the committee and said, "Don't introduce slot machines in the province of Ontario; keep them out of my neighbourhood"? No, they haven't listened to them. Are they listening to the people in other provinces who have experienced life under a regime that has slot machines in every community? No, they're not listening to them. Are they listening to the volumes of documents that have been printed as a result of studies that have been made on the part of learned people who understand this issue far more than most of us? No. Who are they listening to? They're listening to a finance minister who says, "I need money." That's who they're listening to.

He's desperate for dollars. The Minister of Finance has given a tax break to the wealthiest people in this province. He is cutting the budgets of all the line ministries of the government and they're having to make up the difference as best they can. One of the ways they're

doing that is not only by a reduction in services; they are going after the people of Ontario. They want, as my friend from Nipigon would say, to pick their pockets dry by allowing gambling machines to be installed in every bar, every restaurant, in every community and almost every neighbourhood in Ontario. Those people are going to go in there and that's exactly what's going to happen. That money is going to come directly out of the pockets of hardworking men and women, it's going to go into the slot machine and that money's going to come right back into Ernie Eves's pockets, into the consolidated revenue fund.

I say that is not a good idea in regard to how you raise revenue in this province, or not a good idea how to balance the budget. That's not the way it should be done. There are other things the government could be doing and spending its time on other than trying to pick the pockets dry of the people of this province.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, listen, you've been to slot machines. You've seen slot machines before. You know what they're like. You see them standing there. They go there. For people who have never gone, you've got to see this. They walk into a casino at Casino Rama or Windsor or in Las Vegas, wherever, and they've got these little quart jars, right? You've seen them. They're filled with dollars, basically coins that represent dollars. They sit there with literally hundreds of dollars and they plunk one after another and pull the one-armed bandit. What ends up happening? Nine times out of 10, the entire bucket ends up in the machine and doesn't end up back in the pocket of the person who spent it.

It's bad enough to deal with this in an establishment such as a casino that is somewhat controlled. Imagine the problem we're going to have when the minister for gambling, the Honourable Mr Tsubouchi, allows slot machines in every community across the province of Ontario. You're literally going to have people who are going to be sitting at home — because I see it now. You see it in your communities where people have been affected by the cuts of this province, either through higher unemployment rates that we're seeing now or people who've had their benefits cut on social services and people who are about to have their benefits cut who are on WCB, struggling, trying to make ends meet, trying to figure out how they're going to pay their hydro bill and their phone bill.

I had one woman come into my office — I don't want to use her name because she's asked me not to, but she asked me to relate the story to you. There's a woman I was talking to in my office who had her benefits cut on social services. She got caught up in the 22% reduction. She had to face a decision this summer: "Do I pay for my son's hockey equipment or do I pay my hydro, my telephone and a few other bills?" Being the proud woman that she is, because for years she had the money to do this, because she and her husband were fairly well-to-do — the husband left. She's been on her own for about a year. She spent whatever she had in the bank, which was not a lot. She had about \$8,000 when all of this started. Her payments are held up because the Attorney General has got the whole system bugged up — pardon

me, I can't use that, that's unparliamentary; I caught myself, Mr Speaker — has the whole system messed up when it comes to FSP. She hasn't got a dime from the FSP system. I think it was June when she last saw a cheque. She is only getting a minimal amount from the social services ministry.

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She had to make a decision this August, and that's why she came into my office after the decision. She said: "My son, who has played hockey all his life, is now 13 years old. He wants to go back and play hockey again. He needs new equipment. So what did I do? I went out and bought the hockey equipment. I had to decide between paying my hydro bill and my phone bill or supplying my child with the hockey stick and the equipment he needed to play hockey." Guess what happened? Because the Ontario Hydro system now says, "If you don't pay your bill immediately, after 30 days we'll cut off your hydro," Ontario Hydro had given her notice. She technically had her gas shut off at that point and she was just about to get her hydro shut off, because it was just recently she came to see me and was trying to deal with the consequences of that as a result of what you guys are doing.

Don't look at me as if you're wondering what I'm talking about, because you hear the same stories in your constituency offices. Those are the real stories of real people. We will continue bringing those stories here.

As it relates to Bill 75, this woman, who now has no money, was sitting there in my office saying: "Gilles, my gas is shut off, I've got no hot water, my hydro's about to be shut off. What am I to do?" I said, "Listen, there's not a lot to do." I would think the temptation for her, if she had \$5 or \$10, is either to try to go out and buy the loaf of bread and whatever she can to make her son and herself eat, or all of a sudden say: "I've had it. I give up. I'm going to go spend that \$10 and make \$100 at a slot machine."

Don't shake your head at me. Those things happen. Don't sit there and go, "No." How do you think people end up in front of slot machines? How do people take a chance? Why do they go out and buy a lottery ticket? Why do they go to the bingo game? A lot of them, not all of them, because sometimes they are —

Interjection: Casinos.

Mr Bisson: Yes, and casinos at times too. The point I'm making is that at times people are desperate, and there are more and more desperate people in the province of Ontario.

I had another situation, it has to be said. I had another woman come into my office —

Mrs Boyd: There's no casino in Timmins.

Mr Bisson: There is no casino; we'll have slot machines. Who'll need them with slot machines?

There's a woman who came into my office, not this Friday but two Fridays ago. This woman is about 54 or 56 years old. She came into my office for the same reason. She said: "Gilles, I'm desperate. I have no money in the bank; I have no money at my house. I'm hardly able to survive. I haven't paid my rent this month because I've been robbing Peter to pay Paul, to keep the hydro bill paid, to move the money over to the gas bill,

to do whatever." What ends up happening? "I'm really up against the wall. I'm at the point where I didn't pay last month's rent, I'm not able to pay this month's rent, I'm about to be given my notice and I'm at the end of my rope."

The part that really got me was that she said: "I have one grandchild. She's three years old. I love my grandchild. My grandchild comes and visits me almost every day. The other day I had to tell my daughter, 'Don't bring her over.'" Why? Because she didn't have a dime to buy food to put in her cupboard to feed her granddaughter when she came to visit. That's what you guys are doing. She asked me: "Would you please tell them what I'm going through? I'm having to decide between keeping my grandchild away because I don't have money and trying to figure out how I'm going to make up the difference."

It's easy for the government to say, "They just can go out and get a job." But what do you do if you're a woman and 56 years old, living in Toronto or Timmins, and you can't get a job because somebody looks at you and says, "I don't want to hire you as a server because there's somebody a bit younger and a little bit more appealing I want to hire"? Those things do happen. She may not have the experience to get the job in whatever company that might be hiring. This woman's at her wit's end.

I'm saying that with Bill 75 there's going to be a lot more — let me rephrase this so I don't say something wrong here: There are more desperate people in our communities today as a result of what this government is doing. Bill 75 is going to play into that in the sense that as those people are more desperate they're going to be looking for pretty desperate ways to make ends meet. You are going to see that group of people, those people who are less able to defend themselves, in there trying to make a dollar quickly because they've lost hope.

I say to the government, understand where I'm coming from. I say it again: I'm not opposed to gambling. That's not the issue here. I voted for the creation of casinos and I'd do it again. The issue here is that it has to be controlled and regulated to a certain extent. What this government is doing is allowing all of these slot machines to be put in every community across this province.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: They're there now.

Mr Bisson: The Minister of Agriculture just said something intelligent: "They're there now." How many more do you think are going to happen as a result of this bill? The Fredericton police in this report are greatly concerned at the increase of slot machines. The reports that have been done in Manitoba, New Brunswick and other provinces have said it hasn't reduced the amount of illegal gambling; it's actually increased it. Will the Minister of Agriculture please read the reports of his government?

Everybody who has looked at this issue from a policing standpoint, who has looked at the results of the policies of provincial governments in introducing slot machines, has said that with the introduction of legalized slot machines in communities there is a larger temptation to use slot machines, and with that increased use comes

the proliferation of slot machines, not only from the government, but from organized crime. Organized crime activity in slot machines has actually gone up in jurisdictions where VLTs have been allowed. So don't come here and say, "We're going to control the legalized gambling." Come on. Get straight. Read your own reports.

It's not the member for Cochrane South who's making this up, it's not the member for Welland-Thorold making it up; it's the people who have experienced gambling, who have gone and looked at the results of introducing slot machines in communities, who have written the reports that are available to this government to make up its own mind. But the government hasn't listened to Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, our critic on this matter. They haven't listened to the Liberals. You're certainly not listening to me at this point.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Did you listen to Peter?

Mr Bisson: I always listen to Peter. I think Mr Kormos is a fine member who contributes greatly to our caucus.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Did you vote for casinos?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: Look, I've woken them up. One of them there just asked, "Did you vote for casinos?" How many times do I have to say yes? Lord, I wish the government would sometimes get a grip on it.

The report goes on to say:

"It has been suggested that Fredericton may be a suitable yardstick to compare to the rest of New Brunswick with respect to video lottery gambling due to the social, economic and political makeup of the city.

"This paper, and the ongoing probe into the video lottery gambling situation in Fredericton, was not intended for use as a yardstick for comparison with other cities or locations. The facts presented are an effort to analyse crime trends in the city of Fredericton and to supply Fredericton Police Force administrators with the best possible tools to manage the force."

They're recognizing that there's a problem. I say to the government — I've got to say it again — read your own reports, please. That's what they're there for. There are people out there who have spent a lot of time and know a lot more about this than most people around here, who are just begging for the opportunity for you to take a look at the work they've done — within your own ministries, within the OPP, within other jurisdictions that have dealt with video lottery terminals called slot machines — and are asking you to look at the reports. I'm sure that if you were to read the reports you would have a very difficult time standing up in this House and voting yes.

There we go. I just got a nod in the affirmative on the other side. I like that. We're getting somewhere. We've got one on side. I hope that means you're going to be voting no.

The other thing I say to the backbenchers is that — listen, I say it again — being a backbencher in a government is a tough job. I've been there; I understand it. It is tough because you're not in the centre of power, you're not at the cabinet table and you're not always privy to everything that goes on around the cabinet table. But you

have a responsibility — and one of the reasons I got re-elected, I believe, is because I took that responsibility seriously — to come to the Legislature, to go to your caucus meetings, to go meet with the Premier or the minister responsible when there's an issue that your community is telling you there's a problem with and on their behalf, on behalf of the community, to say what your community has to say and pass it on to the minister responsible.

You're not going to make me believe for one second that out of the 80-some-odd Tories that are in this House you haven't been lobbied by people who have a problem with casinos — who have a problem with slot machines. I've been going on here for an hour, so I guess it's about time I come to an end when I start —

Mr Bradley: No, no. Keep going.

Mr Bisson: Keep going? Okay, here we go. We're going to do it again.

You're not going to tell me for one second that you don't have people in the community who have come to you as Tory members and said, "Bring this message to Mike Harris and to the minister of gambling, Mr Tsubouchi, and tell them I'm opposed to casinos." I would be willing to wager that if you were to do that, you'd probably have a better chance in your community to gain the respect of the electorate and hopefully get re-elected, because I don't believe that you're going to be in really good shape come next election time on the basis of what this government is doing, not only when it comes to Bill 75, but when it comes to a number of other issues you're dealing with. You have to have the respect of the people you represent and bring the views that they bring to the table and to the Legislature so that people can hear their voice through you. That's your responsibility.

1630

I want to say for the record, I want to say it again because I said it at the beginning, and maybe some of you weren't there: There are people in my community who support putting slot machines in communities. There are. But they are not the majority. I can give you some names. One of them is a good friend of mine. I shouldn't use his name because maybe he doesn't want me to use it, but there are people I've talked to over the period of six years who have lobbied me both in the business community and in the general public who would like to see a casino in Timmins or who would like to see slot machines in the community, and I've brought those views to the caucus and I've brought those views to this Legislature.

In the end, I was pretty honest with them. I said: "No, I don't support the introduction of slot machines in our community. I don't see that as being a good use of public policy. I think we'd be better off trying to deal with other issues that are far more important than dealing with the revenue that you're going to be getting from slot machines."

I say again, the government should at the very least dedicate part of the revenue from the dollars that they're going to raise through slot machines to policing in order to deal with the organized crime element of it if you're going to go for it, dedicate some of the dollars towards the addiction issues and the issues of crime, because we

know there are going to be more people getting addicted to gambling as a result of the introduction of slot machines in communities and, number two, there is going to be more activity on the part of organized crime. You have to dedicate dollars to that. You can't have happen what you're doing now, can't get away with saying, "The Treasurer of Ontario, the finance minister, will get all the dollars."

You at least need to take a look at this from the perspective of the effect that it's going to have on organizations and communities that are fund-raising. With the introduction of video lottery terminals, called slot machines, the crack cocaine of gambling, it's going to become increasingly difficult for other charities out there to raise dollars. Why? Because they're going to be competing for those dollars that are less and less because more of them end up in the slot machines. Simply put, there is only so much disposable income to go around any community. Every dollar that goes into a slot machine is a dollar that won't go into something else and will not go into other charitable organizations.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I see the member for Scarborough East just woke up. Welcome to have you in the Legislature.

You're going to be in direct competition with charitable organizations that are trying to fund-raise and are having a difficult time of it to boot because of what your government is doing in the reduction in expenditures. They are having to compete with more and more people who are trying to fund-raise as a result of the cuts.

The other thing I say is, one of the secrets in this legislation is, when it comes to charitable gaming, as it stands now, 100% of the dollars raised through charitable gaming stays in the community. It goes back to the organizations. Once the operator has operated it, paid the cost of operating it, the rest of the money stays in the community to the organization. The only money the government makes is on the licensing. Under this bill, guess what's going to happen? You're going to end up in a situation where 50% of the money made is going to go back to the government. And how does that help our communities? The government says and Mike Harris and the rest of the ministers, "We want to see people volunteer and we want to see people get involved in their communities and we want to see people come up with their own solutions and do things for themselves." Well, you keep on taking away the tools that they have to do things for themselves.

I say to the government, shame. You can't have it both ways. If you're serious about that, leave the communities with the tools they have, the very few tools they have, to be able to deal with fund-raising. By allowing video lottery terminals, you're going to be in direct competition with churches like Perpétuel Secours, with the Church of the Nativity, with other organizations in the community, the Dante Club and others, who are trying to raise dollars to support their communities. It's going to become more difficult.

When you're allowing 50% of the dollars through charitable gaming to go back to the province, that's a direct grab on those very few dollars that are left in the community. The government stands to make what? They

stand to make literally hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue with this. So why are they doing it? They're doing it because they have to pay for a tax cut and they're trying to balance the budget. Why don't you come clean? I would like it at least once that a government member would stand up and say, "Yes, I agree; we are doing this because we need the revenue," and not try to qualify it with everything else that goes on, because the reality is you are doing this for the revenue. The government can't hide behind that. It's not because you're trying to deal with organized crime in the industry. That's not what this is all about.

I say again, in the few minutes that I have left, that the minister for gambling and the Solicitor General have been sitting on reports that they're not making public. We've been asking for certain reports to be made public, we're asking the minister to table reports that we know are in existence that speak to this issue negatively, I would say, and the government sits on them and says, "I haven't read the report, I haven't seen the report, I don't want to look at the report because, if I do, I'll find out that what I've been told about it is true, which is that it ain't good for the province of Ontario."

It is incumbent upon the responsible ministers to make sure that information comes forward. Why does the Solicitor General sit on the report from the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario? Either the Solicitor General is not looking at the notes that come across his desk, is not reading his briefing notes, is not paying attention to what happens in his ministry, at which point he should be turfed out, along with the minister responsible for gambling, or they're withholding information from the people of this province. That's not what government is all about. Government is supposed to be open, in a democracy, where people have information and are able to make decisions based on facts and available information. By withholding reports, you're doing nothing to deal with that.

There will be a temptation on the part of many people in this province who are economically disadvantaged, because of the policies of this government, to go out and spend that last dollar in the slot machine. In doing that the government is not only hurting the first policy, which is to reduce the amount of money they get in the first place; they're going to take the money out of the pockets of people who can least afford it.

You go back to your constituency every so often — as government members you have to — and sit with constituents, as I do, in your constituency offices; you meet with constituents in various locations. Those constituents will tell you the same story they're telling me: They're finding it more difficult to get along today because of the policies of your government. What the reduction in welfare rates has meant to people in our communities is a tragedy.

When I have a woman come into my office, like I did the other day, who says, "I have to stop my granddaughter from coming into my house to visit me because I have no food in my cupboards, not even a stick of bread, not a pint of jam, not a jar of peanut butter," to give her granddaughter and she's having to tell her daughter to keep the granddaughter away, it rips me apart. I'd never

seen this in the time that I've been a member, but over the past months by the end of Friday I'm literally drained, along with my staff.

People are coming in who are desperate, and it rips your heart to hear what some of them have to tell you, which is increasingly becoming the norm come Friday. At one time, as the member for Cochrane North and others would know, when we had people come into our constituency offices it was because they had an economic development proposal. They may have had a problem with government and wanted a little bit of help to deal with that. Generally there were positive things that were happening. But we're seeing over and over again people affected by the policies of this government who are becoming economically and socially disadvantaged as a result of those policies.

You see them. You can't sit there and tell me that you don't, because they're out there. If they're coming into my office, they're going into yours. People in Timmins are no different from people in Brampton; they're no different from people in Hamilton. They hurt, they bleed and they're affected the same as anybody else in this province when it comes to your policies. Allowing gambling to be introduced into local bars and restaurants in our communities, allowing those machines to prey on the last dollars some of those people have, is going to do nothing socially or economically but spell disaster and ruin for many people in this province. I urge the members of this government to reflect on what they're doing and vote against this legislation and get back to the business of governing the province, not dealing with a tax grab.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): In response to the member for Cochrane South, people of Ontario are the final decision-makers. Out of respect for people, I believe they can make up their own minds and decisions.

You must recognize immediately that gambling exists today — I don't have to move much further from Windsor, Rama, Nevada tickets, 6/49s — along with the charity gaming facilities that we're aware of.

We're trying to deal with what exists. It might be stated that you started it.

This is a comment made by Paul Walter, president of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association, just a couple of lines: "Legalizing VLTs, as they are commonly known, will have a severe financial impact on criminal activities and organized crime." The content of his letter suggests that unless we legalize it, we cannot deal with it.

Furthermore, you asked, are we listening? I would ask you the same question. I'm looking at a statement here made by the member for Riverdale, Ms Churley, who is sitting in the chair at the moment, and she was speaking rather enthusiastically in 1993 in the debate on casinos. "With a government-owned casino in Windsor, the ultimate winner will be Ontario: Ontario consumers, who will have a greater choice of entertainment options; the increased entertainment option will also benefit the Ontario tourism industry; and it will also benefit the province through new dollars and new jobs."

It's very clear that each individual citizen certainly has the responsibility not to abuse the privilege or the options in life, but to ignore what already exists I think would be a further error. I'm not for ignoring what exists. I'm thinking we need to regulate it, and that's what Bill 75 is about.

1640

Mr Bradley: I want to commend the member for Cochrane South on an excellent speech on this particular bill, which I think is one of the most important bills we've had to deal with so far. I was particularly intrigued by the fact that he suggested that it was really the Premier's office and the key advisers — unelected advisers — to the government who were the motivators behind this, and his observation, I think quite accurate, that many in the Progressive Conservative caucus, many who go to church on Sunday and are certainly people who are very conscious of other moral issues and are not afraid to express their views on them, would be the same individuals who would be very concerned about the effects of video lottery terminals coming to every restaurant and every bar in every neighbourhood in the province of Ontario.

I share his view, I must say, that there must be many in the Progressive Conservative caucus, good family people, people who have seen the damage that extensive gambling and increased gambling opportunities have caused for people in their own community and others, who would be, at least privately, opposed to this initiative. I join the member in expressing the hope that many in the Progressive Conservative caucus will express that view to the Premier and the senior ministers. There's not much to be lost in doing so. I don't expect the people who are looking to get into cabinet to do so, because the job of those trying to get into cabinet is to get up and read the notes and say, "I agree with what the Premier says, and that's the way it's going to be." I'm not even critical of that; I understand that. But there must be a lot of people in that caucus who really have reservations about what the provisions of this bill will do, and I join the member in expressing the hope that those members, through the caucus, will express to the Premier that view and suggest that he withdraw this bill.

Mrs Boyd: I also wish to congratulate my colleague from Cochrane South on a very thorough analysis of the concerns, from his constituency's point of view, around the VLT situation. He made the point very clearly that the VLT situation is different from any of the other forms of gambling that have been undertaken in Ontario over the last 25 years. He makes that point, which was made to our government and which we listened to and refused to put VLTs into neighbourhoods, because of the advice of people like Tibor Barsony, who runs the compulsive gambling foundation, who clearly talks about the reality of gambling being in existence, that people will go to other venues in order to gamble, but that the real problem comes from the slot machines, that all the research shows that those slot machines are the most corrosive kind of problem for people who are problem gamblers.

I don't know how many of the members on the other side know families that have been devastated through compulsive gambling and how many of them understand

the difference between the VLT experience, the isolation of the VLT experience, the reality of the way in which putting those coins in and pulling that handle is very compulsive for people in a way that is not controlled by a dealer at a table, is not controlled by the circumstances of the venue. So when the member for Durham East talks about trying to compare putting a very restricted form of gambling into a casino in one location, which is what our government did, it is a very different thing than putting a gambling machine, a one-armed bandit, on every corner in this province.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to start by just saying that when the Gaming Control Commission was instituted by the prior government, some controls were sorely needed in the province. That was a very good step.

Unfortunately, the current suppliers that were used were grandfathered through and so they weren't subject to the normal checks that would have been done. I think that's unfortunate, but as we know, steps have to be taken progressively. That's something that we will be looking at very seriously in Bill 75: taking this further to make sure that it's very tight now, the regulation, the controls and the supervision. So yes, the prior government did something good — I'll give them credit for doing that — but we're going to take that further because it's very necessary.

The member from London was indicating that Tibor Barsony was supporting their efforts at the time. Certainly he indicated, because of our allocation of funds to problem gambling, it's sort of like the light at the end of the tunnel after 14 years. Once again, to your credit, you allocated about \$1 million to problem gambling, and that's good, but we're looking to increase that by about 900%. It's very important for us to recognize that. I think groups like ARF really recognize the fact that we are putting more resources into this.

A question was asked whether or not we listened to the member for Welland-Thorold. I suppose I should ask you the same thing. Did your government listen to the member for Welland-Thorold? I assume that you didn't, although you know something? He has raised some good points in the past. Certainly he indicated before that — the casinos at the time were a good opportunity for your government to address the debt that you had run up, so certainly the member for Welland-Thorold had a good point, but obviously your government didn't really listen to him much as well.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, you can sum up.

Mr Bisson: To the minister, yes, we did listen to the member for Welland-Thorold and others, because we didn't introduce VLTs. We didn't introduce slot machines in the province of Ontario because we thought then, as we do now, it was wrong and it would lead to problems in this province. That's the point I was trying to make.

To the member for Durham East, in reverse order, you talk about — and I think the member for London Centre responded to it in good detail. Trying to compare what happens in a casino to what happens with the slot machine at a corner local bar is quite a different thing. As the member for London Centre said, a casino is in one

geographic area that's contained in the building and there's controlled access to it. When you allow VLTs, slot machines, the crack cocaine of gambling, to be introduced into every bar across this province, you're not going to be able to control it.

You talk about the need to regulate. Well, it's an interesting approach to regulation. The government says, "We are going to regulate the use of slot machines in Ontario so that we're able to deal with how many slot machines are in this province." What's their response? Open the floodgates, allow a slot machine to be installed in every community across Ontario and — sorry if I laugh — that's going to deal with regulation. Come on. It's like saying we're going to post a speed limit and deal with it by increasing the speed limit and letting people do what they want. You can't do that. Come on. You guys are unbelievable.

To the member for St Catharines, who talks about the Premier making this decision along with people in the back rooms of Queen's Park and the golden-haired children who are in the Premier's office, yes, that is the point. This is not a consensus by the Tory caucus. This bill is not a consensus of what happened in the Tory caucus. We know that. There's a split within the Tory caucus because there are members in that caucus who don't want this to happen. Mr Murdoch is one. I'm saying you have a responsibility as backbenchers to bring this forward to your cabinet table if you're in cabinet, or to your caucus if you're in the back bench, and say: "Don't do it. It's a bad idea. It ain't gonna work. It's going to lead to a whole bunch of problems in this province."

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): It's a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 75 today, an issue that I have taken a great deal of personal interest in, especially considering the impact it's going to have on my riding of Niagara South.

Perhaps I could turn down the hyperbole a bit and talk about what's going on in Fort Erie today. Fort Erie, the largest city in my riding and the largest part of the constituents I represent, is the home of the Fort Erie Race Track, as the members well know, which employs, they estimate, with the spinoffs, about 4,500 to 5,000 jobs throughout the Niagara Peninsula, throughout my riding, a lot in Port Colborne and Wainfleet, the agricultural sector, people coming down from Niagara Falls and throughout the rest of Ontario.

Certainly the racing industry has been on a bit of a slide in the past, the sport of kings, a beautiful sport to watch. If anybody's been to the Fort Erie Race Track — I know the member for Niagara Falls was recently there — it's probably the most beautiful track in Ontario, if not North America, the best one I've been to. I certainly think so. It's also the home of the second jewel of Canada's triple crown, the Prince of Wales Stakes.

Despite a history going on 100 years, the racing industry, including in Fort Erie, has been going a bit in the direction I'd prefer it not to, a bit downhill in terms of employment and attendance. Certainly there are some more challenges coming up in the future with Casino

Niagara, a challenge for the racetrack, and if Buffalo, New York, goes into gambling as well, certainly a very strong challenge there. So there are 4,500 or more jobs that I would say, without action by this government, without action by the member for Niagara South, would be in jeopardy.

Before Bill 75 was even introduced, a number of us there in the riding — Herb McGarr, working at the track, for one, a very strong advocate for Fort Erie Race Track; John Palumbo from the economic development corporation, another; Sam McComb at the racetrack — and a number of other individuals got together to talk about how we can address the future of the racetrack. One thing we hit upon some time ago — I guess over a year ago now — was video lottery terminals at racetracks.

If you look at the interjurisdictional evidence, how has this experiment worked elsewhere? If you look at the experience in Delaware, for example, Delaware Park and Dover Downs both put VLTs at the racetracks and both had tremendous success not only in bringing people in for the VLTs, but in increasing the patronage at the track. Seeing the purses go up, in Delaware Park now they've gone though millions of dollars in renovations to beautify the track, put in a hotel at the racetrack. Prairie Meadows is another example where the purses with VLTs almost doubled. Lincoln Park in Rhode Island, which I think is a dog track, faced a challenge from a casino in Connecticut. They put the VLTs in at that track and turned that track around tremendously.

If I could speak for a moment about the people working in the backstretch at Fort Erie today and the next few weeks of the racing season who strongly advocate and want us to proceed, there were a number of calls today to the Tim Hudak Action Centre in Stevensville, because some of the press had reported that Bill 75 had already passed. It hadn't passed yet, and I certainly hope it does so soon for the benefit of my riding, but there were all kinds of calls saying: "Fantastic. We did it. We got it through. It's better for the racetrack. We can proceed."

All kinds of blue sky dreams of what can happen to the Fort Erie Race Track to preserve those 4,500 jobs and maybe in the long run increase employment at the track, and then work with Casino Niagara down the road and make it a win-win situation. Those eight or nine million more overnight stays of the tourists, circle them around a bit. Have them stay, come into the Fort Erie Race Track for a day, head up to Port Colborne, go down to the Marshville Festival in Wainfleet, all these opportunities.

People at the tracks are very hardworking people who are up before sunrise, work late into the night, very plain-spoken people who don't always have a great deal of access to the inner corridors of government. Certainly when they asked for VLTs in the previous government, they were ignored. But they're soft-spoken, plain-spoken, not a lot of \$1,000 suits in that group. But I, as the member for Niagara South, listened to those folks and I know our government has as well. The previous minister, Norm Sterling, and the new minister, David Tsubouchi, know the challenges that Fort Erie Race Track faces and

will do their best to get this bill through to help out those at the Fort Erie Race Track.

Mike Robitaille, the general manager of the racetrack, when we did a little press conference there to announce that VLTs were being considered by the government, said that every day he would come into work and somebody would ask him: "Is the track going to be open three months down the road, four months down the road? Will the track open for its 100th anniversary next year?" Then Mike said: "When the VLT announcement was made, those questions finally stopped. It's turned around 180 degrees. It's all optimism now; all these stories of what developments we're going to have at the track; new jobs possibly; how we can preserve these 4,500 people associated with the Fort Erie Race Track."

When the justice committee came down to Fort Erie, I was proud to have it hear what the residents in Niagara had to say about Bill 75.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): What did they say?

Mr Hudak: Mike Robitaille, for one, is quoted in the *St Catharines Standard* as saying of VLTs, "This is a window of opportunity like we've never, ever seen before." There's certainly a great deal of excitement in my riding for the opportunities created by video lottery terminals.

There's a movement afoot to bring a charity event site into the riding. Right across the border from Fort Erie is Buffalo, New York. There are about 10 million people within 200 kilometres. It's not even a day's drive, not too far of a drive, and around eight million people coming to stay overnight in Niagara to visit Casino Niagara. It's a great opportunity for a charity event site to benefit charities like the Head Injury Association and the Ridge-way Lions and the Optimists in Port Colborne, who are trying to work with the city of Port Colborne for a new park. I can think of the gentleman in Wainfleet who was talking to me about minor hockey and the need for uniforms. There's a great deal of opportunity for the charity events to bring money into the charities and to create jobs as well.

I know from speaking with Jeff Newman of Paradise Casino, the manager down there, that he knows he's going to lose a lot of dealers. They're going to move up to Casino Niagara. But at the same time, with the opportunity for a charity event site in Niagara, he can hire more people, get them off the unemployment rolls or move them up through the system, give them the chance to work, provide for their families, maybe buy that home finally, take advantage of lower interest rates.

Mr Grimmett: Get a racehorse.

Mr Hudak: Buy a racehorse and keep that cycle going; an excellent suggestion from the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. There are a great deal of opportunities, not only with the racetrack, but also with a charity event site in the riding.

I think also of the private member's resolution that the House helped me pass last week asking the federal government to put two out of 10 cents of the gas tax back into highways in Ontario, a \$2-billion investment. When we see the traffic coming across the Peace Bridge in the next few years for Casino Niagara, and I hope for

the racetrack or the VLTs, and I anticipate with a charity event site a large number of cars coming across, we're going to see the traffic go way up on the Peace Bridge. Then with that traffic we can motivate governments to invest more money into the QEW and realize the dream I espoused last week of a six-lane highway all the way from the Peace Bridge to the Burlington Expressway.

Just from experience on the justice committee — we had the opportunity to travel all around the province — the benefits of the VLTs for my riding are clear, and they were repeated in different cities that were on the borders. I know my friend the member for Carleton-Rideau, Gary Guzzo, is going to speak about the benefits for his riding. We were in Ottawa and we heard that very strongly, as well as, I remember, in Thunder Bay, a very strong endorsement of the opportunities, and Kenora. The member for Kenora is going to face a challenge in his own caucus because of the very strong feelings of the businesses and the workers in his riding that want to see these opportunities of Bill 75 come into the Kenora area. I look forward to seeing how Mr Miclash deals with the bill. Across Ontario there's a great deal of support.

One other area we heard a great deal of support for was the roving charity event sites, the roving charity Monte Carlos that are going on right now. In my riding part of the gamble is trying to figure out where the thing is going to be on a given night. They have to move every three days. There are some grey areas we heard expressed across the province: Were charities truly benefiting from the charity event sites? When you put them in a permanent location, add some ambience, bring in some more customers and attract tourists to the area, to stay in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne and Wainfleet for a longer period of time, I know that the Niagara Falls tourism community and the Fort Erie tourism community and Port Colborne are looking forward to working together for all these opportunities that come from Bill 75.

If, before I pass my time on to Mr Guzzo, I can address the issue of addiction that was brought up, it is something I take very seriously, something I wanted to research as much as I could to try to find out the answers as to the nature of gambling addiction. Dr Jacobs, for one, has been very instructive on the nature of addiction. Dr Jacobs says that the 1% or 2% of the population who have gambling addiction problems basically choose their poison. It could be anything from slot machines, as the member from London said, or it could be the racetrack. I certainly could understand the feel of the racetrack and how that could impact on people. It could be playing cards, it could be calling your bookie to show how much you know about the football scores on the weekend. I think, as well, the research will show that there's a whole range of activities that compulsive gamblers take part in.

1700

It's a feeling of moving to an altered reality, is what I understand. It's a movement from maybe an unhappy reality to something where you're a bit better. Dr Jacobs talked about a woman who had played with the dice, played a little craps, who felt like a different person. She felt taller and she felt more attractive, a centre of attention, according to Dr Jacobs's research. So it's not the

type of gambling, it's the behaviour that counts. They just sort of choose their poison.

What do you do about these people who need to move into a different reality? The previous government had this opportunity. They had the option when they introduced new forms of gambling to try to help out these people who had addiction problems, and chose not to put any funds that way; and to the credit, I think, of this government, setting aside up to \$8 million or \$9 million in revenue to treat this addiction, and that's addiction across the board. As I said, it could be VLTs, it could be the racetrack, it could be betting at the bookies, it could be playing dice. This money will help to treat all forms of gambling addiction. It's certainly a fresh approach, and when we were in Fort Erie we had a lot of credit for the New Port Centre in Port Colborne, which said let's be realistic about it. Gambling addiction exists, VLTs exist, some 20,000 already throughout the province. You can let the reality stay or you can move and set the money aside and try to deal with it.

I certainly feel, after over a year of work, with the support of the hardworking people in Fort Erie and Port Colborne and Wainfleet and the Falls — people I'm very proud to represent and people who took a very proactive response to Casino Niagara and challenges from across the border and have pushed for the opportunity of video lottery terminals at the track, have pushed for the opportunity of charity event sites as a permanent site — I am very proud to stand very much in favour of this bill. If I had my way, it would pass as soon as possible to give those opportunities to the racetrack, those 4,500 jobs associated with gaming in Fort Erie, to preserve them, and most importantly to pave the path of prosperity in my riding through Bill 75.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): It's interesting the member for Niagara South mentions how good this is going to be for racetracks. The one question I asked the racetrack spokesperson who came to our committee was how is this going to benefit the racetracks when you've got slot machines in the offtrack betting parlours? Why would you go to the racetrack when you can go offtrack into a restaurant or bar and play the slots there? The slots are going to be in every bar, in every restaurant in your community. You're going to probably keep them away from the racetrack. The racetracks are going to suffer in the long run because these slot machines will keep people in the local neighbourhoods where they'll blow their money there.

The other thing the member for Niagara South points to, he also mentioned that they're going to take two cents of the federal tax on gasoline and use it to build highways. Why don't you tell your own government to take two cents out of the \$2 billion you collect on gas tax? Don't tell the feds what to do. Do it yourself first. You refuse to do that.

In terms of these slot machines, this is all about a government that's desperate for money to feed that tax cut. It's so desperate, it won't even release the secret report from the intelligence unit that says that legalizing them doesn't get rid of organized crime. They're so desperate, they won't even release the report because they

know the report would scare the pants off every citizen in Ontario and the skirts off every citizen in Ontario. This is a government that's desperate for money.

In terms of addiction, they put a few million aside for the addicts. What about the men and women who are going to lose their homes, and they are losing their homes, because of addiction to gambling? Who's going to pay for those mortgages, the \$50,000 they lose in gambling in one shot, especially on these machines, which are the lowest common denominator machines. They're the crack cocaine of gambling for the bottom-end gamblers. They're not for big-time rollers. The poor are going to get ravaged by these machines.

Mrs Boyd: To hear the member for Niagara South, one would think that no one else ever heard of the importance of racetracks to the economy of a number of places in this province. My own town has a racetrack, and we are all very well aware of the numbers of people who depend very much on their income from racetracks. They are very often people who are not employable in other areas. Many who work on racetracks are not easily employable elsewhere. That's exactly why our government took a lot of action, through our minister at the time, around saving racetracks. We found it was extremely important for us to give some support to racetracks, which were finding many difficulties.

Who got the Breeders' Cup to Ontario, for example? Would it ever have happened with a government like yours, which refuses to give the seed money that is necessary to bring the kind of occasion to Ontario that will bring many thousands of dollars into the economy? Probably not, because you're so proud of saying that people should make it on their own, that they should be independent and that they shouldn't have to do that sort of thing.

Instead of that you throw out the idea that somehow, by spreading VLTs all over this province, creating all sorts of gambling issues in communities that never had gambling issues before, you're saving racetracks. One of the things you folks in the government party are very fond of doing is talking about other people being fear-mongers. The kind of nonsense you just spoke is exactly that.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'd just like to respond to and support the comments made by my colleague from Niagara South. His comments about the need to protect racetracks in this province I think were very well put.

While we hear rhetoric from the other side, unfortunately the last 10 years did not bear substance. Over 25,000 jobs were lost in the horse racing and breeding industry in this province alone in the last 10 years. I say from firsthand experience, as a one-time horse breeder and racer who was driven out of the business by decisions of the last two governments, that the average price of yearlings has dropped every year since 1981. The average employment has dropped every year since 1985. Every racetrack in this province is losing money today and the remaining 40,000 jobs are at risk.

The other side is quite prepared to paint a picture of what might happen when we get to the third and fourth stages of the ultimate VLT evolution, if it ever comes to

that. What we're dealing with in the short term is the implementation of VLTs only in racetracks and charitable casino sites. When it comes to racetracks, whether it's off track betting — my colleague from Oakwood obviously doesn't know that bets there form part of the tote and payout, and no one who goes into an off-track betting parlour doesn't understand that they're there to gamble — whether they're gambling on a VLT or on the actual horse race, it will be the same individuals.

When you talk about addiction, I'll give credit. At least the NDP government gave \$1 million towards addiction. The Liberals did nothing in their five years. A quote from Dr Room at the Addiction Research Foundation says that the 2% of gross revenues from the terminals we're going to give to addiction research causes will build some treatment centres for casualties of gambling in Ontario and be a positive improvement.

1710

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's interesting to note that the member for Niagara South's remarks were limited almost exclusively to racetracks. I think if he listened to my remarks yesterday, racetracks are certainly considered as a controlled environment.

It's further interesting to note that the member for Niagara South said absolutely nothing about the proliferation of these insidious little slot machines in every bar and licensed restaurant around this province. That's where your suggestion that these things should be put in, I believe, starts to fall apart —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member for Scarborough East, order.

Mr Crozier: That's all we're asking. We're asking the member for Niagara South to certainly support those parts of the bill that he feels will be of benefit, but for goodness' sake if you don't think they're going to be of benefit by putting them in every neighbourhood in the province, have the courage to stand up and say so. Because some people might infer that since he didn't mention that he's not in favour of it. As I recall, there were very few, if any, racetracks operators who came to our committee hearings, who after they had put forward their own point of view which, as I said, is for VLTs in controlled environments, said, "Ah, but we'd like to see them as well in every bar and restaurant across this province." They didn't say that. And do you know why? Because they don't favour it either, I think. So that's all we're asking. If you've got the courage to say what's wrong with this bill, stand up and say it.

Mr Hudak: Talk about a lack of conviction. I spent many days on committee with the member for Essex South, who, I joked with him one day, showed more leg and winked at everybody who was up there on six or seven different sides of the issue during committee hearings. So don't talk to me about lack of conviction. I fully support Bill 75. It's good for my riding and you know that I have —

Mr Crozier: I didn't say anything about conviction, I said courage.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Essex South, come to order.

Mr Hudak: — the courage to support this bill and your courage lasted about the five minutes that the person was up there with their presentation. When they're out the door, your position changed.

Mr Crozier: I'll match my courage with your courage any day of the week.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Essex South, come to order.

Mr Hudak: Once more, the member for Oakwood, who if I recall correctly, opposed the federal government putting some money into Ontario's highways, which I thought was a disappointing view, but I understand he wants to protect his federal buddies in Ottawa. So that's very sensible. But to talk about why would you go to the races? Well, look at the evidence —

Mr Colle: What about your government, what about you guys, what about your \$2 billion?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oakwood, come to order, please.

Mr Hudak: — member for Oakwood: Lincoln Park, Iowa; Prairie Meadows; Save Racing in Delaware; Dover Downs; Delaware Park; California; Manitoba. The list is endless. This is a successful form of VLTs at racetracks. It's worked everywhere else, it's going to work in Ontario, it's going to work in Fort Erie. It's going to save these jobs and bring more jobs to the area. The evidence is in.

The member for London Centre, the member of the NDP government, claims to have tried to help the racetrack, but lip-service at best, without action. You had a chance, the members of the third party, to cut the tax to the races. You refused to do that. A possible \$40-million investment. You simply refused to help out that way. People from the track asked for VLTs. You said, "No, we're not going to help out the tracks this way." You ignored the evidence from the rest of North America. You didn't care. You turned your back on the racing industry. Don't pretend to be friends. And calling my arguments, which the racing industry has said for your kind — nonsense, shows the arrogance of the third party when they were in power, and now thankfully the third party in opposition.

I'd say one thing too: Don't talk to me about the horse racing industry, because the third party wouldn't know a horse if it bit them.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on what I consider to be one of the most important pieces of legislation this government has brought forward; important because the ramifications for the province are very dramatic and I think the consequences for vulnerable and desperate people are grave indeed.

Although it's another government, I don't approach this particular issue on a partisan basis. I don't like it when any party does it, and I well recall sitting in the cabinet that someone was always ready to say, "Would you like to have casinos or would you like to have VLTs or something?" and my response was always no. I suspect that every government which wants to get revenue without going to the people with direct taxes is lured in by this. This is not the only government in Canada doing

this by any means, and the Premier and the Treasurer of this province will point to other provinces and other jurisdictions as though that somehow justifies what Ontario is doing with this piece of legislation.

I well recall Mike Harris, if I may call him by his name, and Ernie Eves standing in opposition, making I thought some excellent speeches against gambling in this province. Particularly Mr Eves, the member for Parry Sound, I thought made some very compelling arguments. In this case it was against casino gambling, but he expressed his concern about gambling revenues and governments becoming addicted to gambling revenues. He was right then. I think he's wrong now, even though he may have a view that's different from the Premier behind the closed doors of cabinet. I don't know that; I can't say that. The Premier himself was quoted on many occasions as being opposed to this.

I thought Eric Dowd wrote a good column. This appeared in the Peterborough Examiner on May 15, 1996. I want to quote it because I think it really tells the story of Mr Harris and Mr Eves, two senior people in this House, on this issue. It reads as follows:

"Premier Mike Harris has this strict principle on gambling — he is against it unless it can make his government a lot of money.

"Progressive Conservative Mike Harris was fiercely opposed to expanding ways to gamble before he won last June's election, but since then he has approved a new casino in Niagara Falls and video lottery terminals at racetracks, licensed restaurants and bars.

"Casinos have proven a licence to print money for government and Harris estimates the VLTs alone will bring it a profit of \$260 million a year once they are in full operation.

"This is not quite what Harris and his finance minister, Ernie Eves, promised when their party was in opposition trying to win votes.

"Harris explained, 'We've always known casinos generate cash, but we are not convinced this is the kind of way we wish to raise money.'

"When the New Democratic government introduced the first casino at Windsor in 1994, Harris sneered it was 'driven by thirst, hunger and desire for more cash for government' and 'laid-off workers there can look forward to minimum-wage jobs dealing blackjack and serving watered-down drinks to Americans.'" The Premier said that.

"Harris said the NDP had no mandate to introduce a casino and the Tories would hold a binding, province-wide referendum before allowing more.

"Eves in opposition was even more scathing. When the NDP announced its Windsor casino, Eves protested that 'governments of all stripes in all provinces seem to be more and more addicted to the revenue that can be obtained from gambling.'

"Eves challenged the NDP: 'Are you suggesting the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Ontario Provincial Police would be in favour of introducing casino gambling into Ontario? I would suggest they probably would not and it would be the furthest thing from their desires.'

"Eves warned, 'Wherever casinos are found they are inseparable from organized criminal activities. There are

going to be many societal and law enforcement problems.'

"Eves even had specific criticisms of VLTs, explaining Nova Scotia dropped them because of 'quite a few instances of people becoming addicted to them.'

"Gambling there, Eves said, 'was placing a great cost on the health system because it has to send the gambling addicts it has created to the US for treatment.' Eves said the NDP at least should raise the gambling age from 19 to 21.

"As recently as a couple of months ago he was still warning 'My personal feeling is that VLTs could create a lot of social problems.'"

Well, he was right. I agreed with both of them when they made their speeches in opposition. They were good speeches, I thought then, of conviction. What has happened since then to change this government's mind, to prey upon the most vulnerable, desperate people in our society and those who are addicted to gambling? It is a desire for more revenue and nothing less.

I can't believe there aren't people in the government caucus who understand — I understand those who must say what they say. They read the government line, and you can hear it, whether it's one member or another, and those who wish to advance. I accept that there are going to be those. But I suspect there are many in the government caucus who are really reflecting upon this as a move that is a big mistake on the part of this government. I think those who think that are being wise and are entirely right.

What we have is a government that has made a decision to give a 30% cut in income taxes, a tax cut which will benefit the richest people in our society the most. You were warned that if you do this before you balance the budget what would happen was that you would have a shortfall, when you had it fully implemented, of \$5 billion a year in revenue and that you were going to have to do one of two things, though you've done both: make further and deeper cuts than were ever contemplated and, second, find new sources of revenue. You're doing the first and now you're doing the second with this bill.

1720

What this bill allows for is video lottery terminals, or electronic slot machines, in virtually every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in the province, and I can't think that is healthy for our society. That's what I am particularly opposed to.

As members who have been in this House for a number of years know, I am no fan of casinos either, but the fact is we have casinos in this province. They are a controlled environment, just as, I suppose, a racetrack is a controlled environment in terms of gambling activities. But with this, you are bowing to pressure from people who want these machines in their bars and restaurants. I know that may be popular and I know some members will say, "That's going to benefit my riding," but sometimes you have to stand up to those who are putting the pressure on. Sometimes you have to stand up for the principle of avoiding putting further temptation in front of those who are the most desperate people in our society.

That's why this government is doing it. I think that's a fair conclusion. I don't really think that the Minister of Finance of this province, who has made outstanding speeches in this House and in other places against gambling profits for government, really believes that the proliferation of VLTs, video slot machines, into every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario is good for our society. Yes, it will bring in hundreds of millions of dollars to this government, and every Treasurer likes that, every Premier likes that. But you have to ask yourself, as individual members, what price are you prepared to pay to get this revenue? Is it really worth that price? I think it is not. I know some others have different views and I respect those views, but I really believe it is not worth that.

There are so many articles on this quoting experts in the field. I'm a political person, a representative elected at a local level. I meet a number of people. I hear about these instances. But there are people who do studies on this, from universities. These are psychologists and psychiatrists and sociologists, people who have actually done objective studies of this to see what the effect is on people. Time after time, in article after article, they point out that this is a most addictive, most alluring form of gambling that this bill will permit, that is, video lottery terminals, and they mention why on many occasions.

One that I thought was particularly good was Gary Smith, who has become the gambling specialist at the University of Alberta. He describes the appeal of video slot machines: "First of all, it's the speed at which you can play. You can complete a game cycle in about one and a half seconds once you're adept at playing, and because of that you get the feeling that you're constantly in action. That's what gamblers seek, this tingle of excitement when they're playing all the time, and they control the speed of the play, which you don't in most other forms of gambling, where the dealer or something else controls that speed. Here you can play as fast as you can."

The article goes on to say: "The VLT is the most addictive form of gambling, addictive because it is fast, addictive because it provides instant gratification, addictive because it is paced for the modern way of thinking, younger people who are used to computerized gambling instead of dealing cards or throwing dice. The onward march of the slot machine in Canada has seen only a few reversals."

There's an article virtually every day, if you want to look for it, on the issue of video lottery terminals and the effect of those. The point I'm making is that these are the experts in the field. This isn't just somebody trying to make a little more money on a short-term basis. I know it's attractive. I know people who own restaurants and bars who would love to have these. They would say to me they would love to have them, and I'd like to please those people, I'd like to say, "Yes, you can have them for now" and, "Yes, you might be able to make some profit," but I think the price our society pays is too great. After all, those of us who are elected to this House are elected to protect the vulnerable and the desperate and the addicted from this kind of temptation.

Conrad Black will not be playing these machines. He's a very wealthy man. He does not need this money. He is not a desperate individual in this regard. I'm not going to be playing these machines; many, many people in our society will not. We who are elected are not necessary for the rich and the powerful. Rich people and powerful people do not need their elected representatives. Yes, we must listen to what they have to say, because their viewpoints should be taken into consideration, but they really don't need the protection and assistance of those who are elected to public office, because they are in themselves powerful and wealthy individuals.

First of all, I should say there is some widespread opposition to these. That opposition comes from the people I've described, the experts in the field who have studied this form of addictive gambling. It also comes from most police authorities; from people in the churches, who recognize what this is doing to families because they do a lot of counselling of families who have addicted people within those families. It comes now even from municipalities. My own municipality passed a motion against video lottery terminals going into the bars and restaurants, and I notice that even the city of North Bay passed one, the Premier's own constituency. I understand why they're doing so. They are worried. They will see the consequences in their own communities.

The Treasurer, Mr Eves, has made the argument, as have those who have been given the notes by the Premier's office to read, that somehow there are a lot of illegal machines out there, so they have a solution for it: If there's illegal activity, make it legal and have the government run it. That's as silly as saying that there are people selling crack cocaine out there, there are people selling other illegal drugs, so somehow the government should take over that operation and should sell those drugs and make the profits and have it under a more controlled environment; or that because there are a lot of banks being robbed, perhaps the government should get into the business of robbing banks. They're silly arguments. They simply don't hold water. I think the government knows this, but it's trying to cling to these because of its desperation for these revenues.

There have been some reports that have come out. There's a report we can't get hold of, which I'm very concerned about, a report that this government will not provide to members of this assembly even on a basis where there may be some blotting out of certain areas of the report because there are some sensitive areas. I understand that; I'm not an unreasonable person. But the government will not produce this report. I have a photocopy of the cover of it; I have not seen the report itself. It was on the program *W Five* on CTV, quoted extensively. It's called *Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario*, and the report is *Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns*, 1995.

I find it difficult to believe that the Solicitor General of this province, a law-and-order man, to be sure, in his days in opposition, would not have had an interest in reading this report or at least a report on the report — in other words, a précis of it, an executive summary of the report pointing out the problems — or that the Premier would not have seen this report.

I've noticed as well there's a leaked document which is for the Premier — it's called a briefing note for the Premier — on the subject of illegal gambling, March 18, 1996. Some of the points in this are quite revealing. If you read even this, you see the concern which is being expressed, and this is, as I say, what the Premier received back in March. It says, "It is the responsibility of the individual police forces to allocate resources to combat this problem in their areas."

What does that mean? That means the more time the police have to spend on looking after video lottery terminals in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in this province, the less time they have to deal with important issues of law and order and preserving some kind of peace for people in their communities in dealing with criminal activity of another nature. It's going to put an additional burden on those police forces.

There's a suggestion by the former Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Norm Sterling, that somehow there would be a control in every bar and restaurant. Look, nobody believes that. Nobody believes that, because you're going to have kids going in there playing these machines, you're going to have people, who shouldn't be in there, shelling out their entire paycheque in these machines. You can't supervise them. You can supervise them inside a casino because that is a controlled setting and they are policed. As I say, I'm no fan of casinos, but at least they can be supervised there. They may be able to be supervised within the other controlled setting of the racetrack, but I'll tell you, they cannot be supervised on the basis of every bar and restaurant.

1730

If there are problems out there, and I hear there are illegal machines, then Mr Law and Order, the Solicitor General of the province, can simply go out and close the machines down. I mean, you're a law and order government, you're large as life taking a run at other people who are engaged in criminal activity. I welcome you to stamp out this criminal activity as well by simply enforcing the present law, instead of taking it over and making it a government operation.

The briefing note to the Premier that was leaked to us also says the following: "A comprehensive report entitled Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns, 1995 was prepared by the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario and distributed to its membership in December 1995.

"The analysis shows that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there is potential for abuse in the legal gaming sector. Although the amount of legalized gaming has increased over the years, regulation, investigation and enforcement has remained relatively stagnant."

I think somebody said earlier there were four people in the province who are assigned to this.

The briefing note to the Premier goes on to say, and this is the most telling point of it, "Legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased with interest shown in bookies and wagering on sporting events, video gambling machines and gaming houses."

There it is right there. The report says that if you legalize it, you don't improve the situation. In fact, you

get more people interested in it. The criminal element is moving into the gambling in this province in a big way and this government appears to want to look the other way because it's so desperate for the funds that can be generated by these activities.

There's another report which I think is very good, a letter which comes from the Metropolitan Toronto Police. It comes in this case from Paul Gottschalk, who is the acting staff inspector, special investigation services. Let me read it to you. It was sent to the member for York South, Mr Kennedy, and to the executive assistant for Mr Kennedy, Ms Ann Evans.

"Dear Ms Evans:

"As promised, please find enclosed a collection of news articles, policy papers and a bibliography compiled at our request by the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission on the subject of video lottery terminals (VLTs). As I alluded to in our telephone conversation last week, I am not completely satisfied that we Ontarians are fully aware of the impact that VLTs will have on our quality of life.

"We at special investigation services have received complaints from family members of those who use these machines, complaining of financial devastation to illegal VLTs. These people are the victims, and while I admit that not all users are pathological gamblers, I do believe those numbers are growing and will continue to grow with the legalization of VLTs. I suggest that you will find that the growing use of VLTs is a symptom of a greater malaise related to gambling addiction.

This is really devastating stuff when you think of it. He goes on to say:

"I believe those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect. Illegal machines, which are not subject to taxation or return percentage monitoring, are virtual cash collectors and in the absence enforcement may become indistinguishable as legitimate equipment.

"In closing, I would like to draw your attention to the position held by the chief of police of the London police service, J. Fantino, who is chairman of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, whereupon he states:

"CISO is not in favour of the video lottery terminals; however, since the government is committed, adequate policing must be in place to properly deal with security for the introduction of video lottery terminals."

"I might also add that the government should be prepared to resource policing demands for all collateral criminal activity that I believe will be the product of this legislation.

"I hope this information is some assistance to you.

"Paul Gottschalk,

"Acting Staff Inspector,

"Special Investigation Services,

"Metropolitan Toronto Police."

This letter says it all. This is exactly what's going to happen, and this government proceeds forward.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The former president of the Progressive Conservative Party, who interjects constantly, always gives the message of the government. I know that's what

your job is. I know you want to get into the cabinet and I know you will say anything.

I want to give the member credit. You do that well, giving the government message. You always do it. I know you will never vary from the government message. That's a role that must be played. But there are a lot of members elected to this House who don't want to do that, a lot of members elected to this House who want to think for themselves, who are not necessarily ambitious to move up, to cater to the whims and the fancies of the Premier. Those people, I hope, at least in cabinet and at least in caucus, will speak out. Some will not speak out in here and I guess I understand it. I find it disconcerting, but I understand it. But I hope at least in caucus those who aren't here simply to please the Premier and to laugh at all of his jokes and to agree with everything he says and to give the government line will at least speak out about something like this, when you see the kind of evidence that's forthcoming.

I am surprised, though I guess I shouldn't be, that the government didn't want to share the secret report to which reference has been made, because I am sure that report would not bolster the government argument for this legislation.

Let me say, by the way, there are parts of this legislation which are supportable, which deal with parts of the Liquor Control Act. Part of this legislation is supportable, but certainly not all of it.

If you think people are going to spend a lot more money in these establishments, I think what you will really find is that they'll spend the money on VLTs and won't necessarily spend it on the food and beverages which may be available in a restaurant or in a tavern. So often it isn't additional funds coming in, but it's very attractive.

I think I told the story once in this House before of a restaurant that wanted, and did bring in, offtrack betting. I was in the House making a speech such as this, I think on casino gambling at that time, and I made a reference to offtrack betting. This person phoned me and was furious that I would mention that what had happened was this person had lost his regular customers, because the people who were coming in for offtrack betting were simply gamblers. They were simply people who weren't going to spend money on other products and services that might be available. This person was infuriated with me. I noticed that about a month later the offtrack betting had disappeared from that restaurant, and I admired the person for deciding to go back to the family atmosphere, to the groups and regular customers who had been there before.

I've always thought that Conservatives are supposed to be cautious, Progressive Conservatives, as you are referred to. The Conservatives by nature are not people who are supposed to take risks, risks with consequences for our society. That's why, out of all the political parties in this House, the party I least expected to proceed with video lottery terminals would have been the Progressive Conservative Party, for years a party extremely cautious before embarking upon new social experiments. And this surely is a social experiment.

What is happening with video lottery terminals being permitted in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario is that we are allowing for an escalation of gambling opportunities. As I say, in the best of all worlds and on a personal basis, I am not enamoured with the opportunities that are already there for gambling, but I understand that they are there and I accept that they are there.

What I think we in this House can do today is send a message to the powerful people within the Premier's office and the inner sanctum of cabinet that this mindless escalation, going into the dark, murky waters of every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood, is dangerous. That's a risk that Conservatives, of all people, people of a conservative nature, of a cautious nature, should not be embarking upon.

1740

There are times I listened with interest to the member for Niagara South and the arguments that he made. He spoke of his own constituency and what he wanted to see happen in his constituency and of the people who are going to be delighted with the opportunity to place these in bars and restaurants and even in these casinos — not the casinos such as Niagara Falls or Windsor, but the other so-called charitable casinos — and how good that would be. But I want to say that sometimes you have to vote your conscience. Sometimes you cannot be lured in by the opportunity to please others, whether it is because those others may provide a favour in the future in terms of support, whether financial or otherwise, or whether you simply want to be popular with those people.

Our government in this province and in other jurisdictions should be trying to encourage very positive kinds of businesses. When you lure manufacturing jobs to Ontario, I applaud that. When you bring new service industries to this province, I think that's good for our province. When you assist in any way in doing that, I am prepared to indicate my strong support. But I don't think you do anybody a favour when you proceed with legislation which will allow such widespread gambling in every neighbourhood, next door to every house in Ontario.

I think the government of Ontario under Premier Harris has made a big mistake. I understand why it's doing it; I understand the desperation for revenue is something the government has to confront. I think if you were to abandon this, you would find a lot of people supporting what you're doing, everyday people out there who understand the problems, people who are expert in the field. The most compelling arguments would come from those whose families have been affected by the disease of gambling, those who are very addicted to this particular activity. You can gain the funds. You can make some people like you, and I can think of people in my own constituency who would like to see this happen, but I think you should overcome that temptation.

I have been criticized from time to time because I have been less than enthusiastic about casino gambling anywhere in Ontario. Members used to say across the floor in the other government, "If we had put it in St Catharines, you'd be in favour of it." I said, "No, if you put it in St Catharines, I would not be in favour of it." I would say so publicly, and did on many occasions. I don't want

to fight old battles, so those battles are done and I understand that and I don't think it's productive to go over that old territory.

What is important is the opportunity that is presented to us in this debate today, in this House as this debate continues. That is an opportunity to rethink the position of the government, to reconsider, to look at the reports from the Metropolitan Toronto police, to look at the secret report, or at least some of the conclusions that W Five mentioned on this secret report that the government has which shows the amount of criminal activity that's taking place in gambling and that this can in fact increase. I think it's important in anything we do in this House, in any initiative a government embarks upon, that you look at the consequences. The government will gain revenue, the government will gain favour with many, but I ask the members of this assembly, at what price to our society?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Mrs Boyd: There's one thing that can always be said about the member for St Catharines. He has been indeed, and he is right, very consistent around this issue of the expansion of gambling in the province of Ontario. Liberals may flip-flop on a lot of things, but the member for St Catharines has been quite consistent in terms of his real opposition to the expansion of gambling and his real concern about the problem gamblers that are created when the kind of gambling that we're talking about, VLTs, is available. If we go back over his record, he has said in this House on many different occasions the same thing, so I would say to him that while it is somewhat disconcerting sometimes to a government in power to hear such powerful arguments from the opposition, you at least have been very consistent in your comments on this.

I would also thank him for reading into the record the letter from the special investigations unit that really tells us what the informed police believe is around VLTs. The member for Durham East very gleefully talked about what the head of the police union in Toronto said and pointed to that as police opinion, and it's really interesting to hear this government talk about that particular individual's opinion as having any merit when the Solicitor General made scathing comments about the comments of that particular individual around the tragic events that happened here on March 18. It's really interesting to hear him cited as an expert by the member for Durham East.

I want to say thank you to the member for reading the full letter so that we know what the basis was for that judgement by the special investigations team.

Mr Gilchrist: I have no choice but to rise and comment on the scurrilous allegations made by the member for St Catharines, maligning the members of the government who day after day come into this chamber and represent what we thought were the appropriate ideals and principles in a democracy: that we listen to our constituents and we come in here and we represent them as best as we can, and one other thing — when you make a promise to the voters, as we did in the Common Sense Revolution, that you actually live up to those things. It's

regrettable the member for St Catharines misreads that as somehow toadying to the Premier or aspiring to the cabinet. Nothing could be further from the truth. We're already blessed with probably the most capable cabinet this province has seen in decades.

Mr Wildman: You were against all this.

The Speaker: The member for Algoma, order.

Mr Gilchrist: I think it's also appropriate to ask the member for St Catharines if he remembers being at the cabinet table when the Peterson government approved the roving three-day Monte Carlo events that are the source of all the problem today. I wonder how many of his members voted against that government initiative when they had a chance in this House.

He spoke also at length about the concerns, the criminal aspects or the potential criminal aspects of legalizing VLTs. My colleague from Durham East alluded to the letter from Paul Walter, the president of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association, wherein he says: "Legalizing VLTs, as they're commonly known, will have a severe financial impact on criminal organizations. The problem is with the existing illegal VLTs. This will give controls."

He's backed up by Chief John Kousik, the chief of police in Windsor. He agrees, and in an interview on a local radio station said: "In the new law that they're coming out with" — Bill 75 — "there are a lot of modifications to the regulations. It's going to be very strict. So if there are going to be VLTs, there is going to at least be government control and the rules are going to be there." This will protect society against the existing problem that the member's government created with the roving Monte Carlo events.

Mr Colle: I'd like to commend the member for St Catharines. I can really sense a deep sense of sorrow in his presentation because I think he really believed Ernie Eves and Mike Harris when they were on the other side and they used to say that a government that was so desperate for money that they would rely on gambling to solve their economic problems was a government that was basically bankrupt.

The member for St Catharines believed Ernie Eves, he believed Mike Harris when they said that for years in opposition. So you can see the deep sense of disappointment in the member for St Catharines when now he sees Mike Harris, as the Premier, and Ernie Eves, as the Minister of Finance, have totally transformed themselves into avaricious money-grabbers who are going to use slot machines to solve the economic problems of this province. That is why he is so upset and that is what I think makes him very, very despondent about this government's use of slot machines to Band-Aid over the voodoo economics of trickle-down economics of Reagan.

Paul Walter was mentioned, and Paul Walter will also tell you that in Metro Toronto we're 600 police officers short. Who is going to enforce these slot machines that are going to be in every bar and restaurant? Are they going to hire more OPP officers? Are they going to give more money to municipalities for police officers? They're not going to be able to enforce them. They're going to have — what? — 20,000, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 slot machines in every neighbourhood in this province. Who's

going to make sure that young kids aren't using them, that people who are desperate, unemployed, aren't going to use what they call the crack cocaine of gambling? Who's going to be there to supervise them? Mike Harris or Ernie Eves?

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: You say that with such feeling, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

I had an opportunity to listen to the speech made by the member for St Catharines. On this issue I have to commend the member for St Catharines, because he has been consistent on the issue of gambling as long as I have known him. He opposed it when they were government under the Peterson government, from what I understand from his speech, he opposed gambling of any form under our government and he still opposes the introduction of slot machines in Ontario. I don't think there's a member in this House who can stand up for what was done by the Tory caucus and accuse the member for St Catharines of not being true to his principles. On this issue I have to give him credit.

I know the member for St Catharines thought he had an ally. He thought that with Mike Harris's comments during the Parliament of 1990 to 1995, Ernie Eves and others were allies of his, because he listened as I did in this Legislature during the time of the NDP government when the members of the Tory caucus used to get up time and time again and speak against the introduction of any form of gambling in Ontario. They were opposed while in opposition. They were vociferous in their opposition to the NDP government on the introduction of casinos in Ontario. I know that the member for St Catharines thought he had found an ally. He had heard Mr Harris make comments in the House like: "As Donald Trump" — a good friend of his — "says, 'Gaming doesn't come cheap.' I have to agree with a lot of critics on that. It brings crime, it brings prostitution, it brings a lot of the things that maybe areas didn't have before. There is a big cost to pay."

Mr Colle: Who said that, Mike Harris or Donald Trump?

Mr Bisson: It was Donald Trump, but Michael Harris agreed with that comment and Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, thought, "Finally, I have somebody in this Legislature who's on side, who's square, who's behind me and who believes in the same things." He feels

betrayed by the Premier, betrayed by the members of the Tory caucus who are now reversing and flip-flopping their position in government.

Mr Bradley: I appreciate very much the comments of the member for London Centre, the member for Cochrane South, the member for Oakwood and the member for Scarborough East. I'll deal with the member for Scarborough East because he took a contrary position. I want to commend him. He is certainly predictable. If you want to know what the Premier wants to hear, all you do is listen to the member for Scarborough East. I suspect many of his colleagues know that. I don't expect them to be nodding now, but I suspect many of his colleagues know that if you want to know what the Premier wants to hear, listen to the member for Scarborough East and the former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario will tell you.

I find it passing strange that he has a selective quote from a union leader on this occasion, because I know on so many occasions he's expressed something less than enthusiasm for what union leaders have had to say in this province of ours.

I note that, as has been mentioned by several of the speakers, Mr Eves and Mr Harris were opposed. Let me tell you how good Ernie Eves was on this issue. I bow to him on this issue, because it's been mentioned that I made a number of speeches in the House on it. I used to ask Ernie Eves for some of the material he had. He sat just a few seats over. He had good material. I quoted him in opposition. I still go to the Hansard to get the material he used. Do you know that the Conservative House leader in those days, Mr Eves, was kind enough to provide that material to me and, on occasion, to ensure that I had an opportunity to speak in this House? I agreed with Mike Harris and I agreed with Ernie Eves on that occasion, and I hope the members of the government caucus look back on their words so that they will defend the desperate and the vulnerable in our society.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Mr Speaker, I am due to speak next for our party with respect to Bill 75, but given the late hour, I will do that tomorrow, so I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: It being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Première session, 36^e législature

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Wednesday 23 October 1996

Mercredi 23 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I'd like to read a letter from one of my constituents.

"Dear Mr Cleary:

"My mother relies on a dialysis machine three days a week to keep her alive."

To get treatment, she has to travel to Ottawa. That's three hours' travelling both ways. The woman continues by expressing the stress, the cost and the inconvenience of travelling in the winter months. Many of my dialysis patients have to travel either to Ottawa or to Kingston.

In recognizing that the minister promised this past spring that a provider had been chosen for Cornwall but then reneged because the provider his ministry had selected was subject to a court battle, my constituent adds that dialysis "patients go through enough as it is," and adds that she is willing to do anything humanly possible to make sure that the dialysis machine is in Cornwall.

The Minister of Health made a promise last April 24. The people are anxiously waiting in the Cornwall area — the 32 patients who rely on dialysis weekly — so I'm asking today that the minister please deliver on his promise that dialysis will be available in Cornwall as soon as possible.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is on health care cuts in Cochrane North and the Tory broken promises of the election campaign. I want to direct my statement to the Minister of Health, Jim Wilson.

According to a health care reform blueprint, 30 beds will be closed at Sensenbrenner Hospital located in Kapuskasing and 18 beds at Notre-Dame Hospital in Hearst. These cutbacks will be a devastating blow to the health care of the people of Cochrane North, and so far we have no indication that the savings will go back to the hospitals or to the community.

These recommendations are based on the average stay for a patient in the hospital. The indicator for Ontario establishes 646 patient-days per 1,000 residents. However, I would like to remind the minister that this average does not in any way reflect the conditions prevailing in the riding of Cochrane North, served by these hospitals, and the resources available.

Three weeks ago I was hospitalized at Sensenbrenner. I would like to take this opportunity to thank particularly the doctors there, Dr Ng, Dr Ayeni, Dr Fryer, Dr Seward, Dr Boucher, Dr Beatty, and all the nurses, laboratory technicians and staff, who are doing a tremendous job in providing excellent care and treatment to their patients despite the major funding cutbacks being made by this government in the health care system.

I urge the minister to guarantee that all savings from hospital restructuring within Cochrane North be reinvested in the riding and not used for the 30% tax break to wealthy friends of the Conservative government.

TRISHA ROMANCE

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I recently had the honour of being present when Niagara-on-the-Lake artist Trisha Romance was presented with the Order of Ontario by Lieutenant Governor Henry N.R. Jackman.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Trisha for her contribution to Ontario's heritage. As everyone in this House no doubt knows, Trisha Romance has become known throughout Canada, the United States and the world for her gentle watercolours of family life and family traditions. She is represented in over 600 galleries in Canada and the US alone. All 10,000 copies of one of her most recent works, *Evening Skaters*, were sold out within weeks. Without a doubt Trisha's work has become a tribute to the love of family and the joys and innocence of childhood experiences we can relive when we look at her paintings.

People may not know that Trisha Romance has suffered severe headache pain over the past several years which produces seizures and blackouts. Doctors have yet to find a way to alleviate the problem. Yet she continues to paint and celebrate family and life.

On behalf of the government of Ontario I would like to acknowledge Trisha Romance's contribution to the heritage of Ontario, and I personally wish her well.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Over the past year I've been rising in this House to ask the Minister of Northern Development simply to do his job: to support policies and programs that will enable us in the north to maintain services taken for granted in the south and to help foster the economic development we so badly need.

This so-called advocate for the north has proceeded in the opposite direction: slashing funding and programs, eliminating staff at a much higher proportion than our population warrants and closing down regional offices at breakneck speed.

Now we learn of another blow, one he hopes to quietly slip by us. His ministry is planning to remove its funding for the annual northern health recruitment tour in southern Ontario, which means that the future of this important venture will be in peril.

Surely the minister does not need to be reminded of the success of this program. Dr Christopher Giles of the Atikokan General hospital was recruited on one such tour. He has told me that four out of five physicians on staff in Atikokan were recruited through this program, and not only were they recruited to the north but they stayed — in Dr Giles's case for nine years now. Many of the 40 northern communities that participate regularly in this yearly tour will tell the same story.

Minister, this is a success story you should be proud to support because it works. You're closing our hospitals, laying off our nurses and cutting our funding to long-term care. Don't add to this crisis by taking away our ability to recruit doctors. Reverse your decision today.

RIVERDALE AGAINST THE CUTS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Yesterday I shared the pride of Metro Toronto residents in being chosen as the best city in the world by Fortune magazine. Many of us already knew that. Recognition is long overdue.

But it was appalling to see the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism all puffed up, vainly trying to take credit on behalf of his government. That would be like the Vandals trying to take credit for the glory of Rome.

John Barber points out in the Globe and Mail today that it is those very qualities of life here in Metro, so valued by those "special interests" at Fortune magazine, that are imperilled by this government's shortsighted social and economic policies. He lists "good schools, effective transit, a commitment to social justice and environmental protection."

I would add to that list an excellent accessible health care system, good child care facilities, sports and recreation programming, a rich cultural life and much else endangered by this government's hell-bent drive to finance a big tax cut for the rich.

That's why this Saturday I'll be proudly joining my constituents — moms, dads, kids, teachers, students, nurses, child care workers, the unemployed and many others — who have formed a grass-roots coalition called Riverdale Against the Cuts. We will be joining the thousands and thousands of other Metro residents who will be marching to Queen's Park this weekend to say, "Enough is enough and stop the tax cuts for the rich in Ontario."

1340

JOE TERSIGNI

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): It's my pleasure today to be able to rise in the House and recognize the achievements of a teacher from Guelph who has recently been rewarded with an award for excellence in teaching Canadian history.

Joe Tersigni is a teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School in Guelph and was one of 12 winners in the first annual awards presentation. This award,

organized by Canada's national history society, was presented to Mr Tersigni in recognition of his innovative, exciting and relevant methods for teaching Canadian history.

He has organized what is called the Forum, an annual event that brings together young people to listen and share views on key topics affecting Canadians. Joe himself chairs the event, but students manage it and gain hands-on experience in coordinating, budgeting, design and the promotion of the materials for advertising. Keynote speakers have ranged from prime ministers to journalists to native leaders.

As well, he has organized the Canadian Political Speaker Series, also organized and managed by students, with keynote speakers invited from the federal, provincial and municipal arenas.

Joe Tersigni exemplifies the kind of dedicated teacher whose creativity and enthusiasm provides a positive influence to all his students, teaching them to become involved and knowledgeable citizens in our democracy.

NORTHWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Northwood Neighbourhood Services is a community organization located in my riding of Yorkview.

Northwood Neighbourhood Services has excelled in providing a variety of programs of adult education services, ranging from Red Cross seminars to small business startup sessions. This important community organization also provides vital life skills programs such as stress management courses.

On October 24, the city of North York will join with Northwood Neighbourhood Services in celebrating their Adult Education Day. Mayor Mel Lastman has officially proclaimed October 24 as Adult Education Day throughout the city.

I am sure all members of the House recognize the importance of adult education services, particularly to newcomers and senior citizens. Education is a lifelong commitment and provides endless opportunities to grow and share with all members of the community.

On October 24, Northwood Neighbourhood Services and all members of the community will share together by way of a classroom open house, entertainment and a sharing of experiences. I ask that all members of the House join me in wishing Northwood Neighbourhood Services every success on this special day, as well as expressing our ongoing commitment to the importance of adult education in my community and throughout Ontario.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to set the record straight with regard to the issue of the Metro Days of Action. First of all, the reality is that if there was nothing happening out there across the province, the media would be reporting that no one cares and therefore suggesting that the people of Ontario accept this hard-line Harris agenda, and they don't.

The second thing is that it would send a message to the government that not only should it continue but it should go even harsher and further than it's already doing.

It's also not just labour. Although labour is an important and crucial partner in this, it's not just labour; it's also environmentalists, seniors, youth, injured workers, child care workers, housing activists, community sports volunteers, teachers, the disabled. We call that the community; you call that special interests.

We'd like to know, when did your corporate friends and your banker friends stop being special interests? They stopped being special interests when you formed the government in this province. I can remember the Bay Street protesters came out against the policies of the NDP, and they came out just like everybody else. They cheered and they chanted and they carried placards and they sang. The only difference is they were all wearing striped suits and they arrived in taxicabs.

The fact of the matter is the Metro days of protest, just like those in Hamilton and in Kitchener and in London, are the exercising of the democratic rights of a free people to have free speech and free assembly, and that's why we support those Days of Action.

PROJECTS IN MUSKOKA-GEORGIAN BAY

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to inform the House of several projects in my riding that demonstrate the ability of community organizations to make an investment in their own futures without financial support from the Ontario government.

First, there's a new waterfront project in Midland. That includes the launching of a new Rotary trail and pavilion. It's all part of a revitalization of the downtown Midland area. This is a first step in what will become a \$100,000 investment to develop the shoreline, every dollar being invested by the Midland Rotary Club from funds raised in the community.

Another community-based project in my riding is the Gravenhurst Rotary Club's contribution of \$50,000 in cooperation with Easter Seals to fund the installation of an elevator which will assist the disabled at the Gravenhurst Opera House. This will enable a number of individuals to attend performances there for the first time.

A third initiative is in the town of Bracebridge. That municipality has turned to local businesses and asked that they sponsor the annual maintenance costs for local parks. So far the response has been very promising, with Scandura Canada taking up the maintenance of Bracebridge Bay Park.

All of these projects are an example of local solutions and initiatives which press ahead without the need for provincial government funding.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

REGULATION OF LOAN AND TRUST INDUSTRY

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): In our May budget, I said we would eliminate overlap and duplication in regulating the loan and trust industry. With the actions we are announcing today, we are delivering on that commitment and making government work better for Ontarians.

This government will keep our promise to put an end to an unnecessary layer of rules on trust companies. Under Ontario's current requirements, known as the "equals approach," all trust companies in the province must comply with Ontario's rules even when they are also regulated by the federal government, and in some cases by other provinces. Having two sets of government regulate an industry like this just doesn't make any sense. It is costly to taxpayers and it hampers the industry's ability to respond to the changing needs of individual and business customers.

We believe that regulation should be undertaken by the level of government best positioned to do it. Through our actions, we will ensure that consumers continue to be protected and small businesses have greater access to capital while enabling trust companies to compete without the unnecessary constraints and costs of complying with multiple sets of rules.

Today I am releasing a discussion paper on the future of trust company regulation in Ontario. Through this we are seeking input on important issues, including more efficient ways of protecting consumers and whether Ontario should continue the provincial incorporation of trust companies. We would like to hear from all interested parties. I have asked my parliamentary assistant, Isabel Bassett, to consult with the industry, business, consumers and other stakeholders on how best to improve the efficiency of the loan and trust regulatory system.

This government is committed to eliminating red tape, overlap and duplication. We are committed to improving the climate for business and job creation in Ontario. The announcement I am making today delivers on those commitments. It is good for consumers, it is good for business and it is good for jobs.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to respond to the announcement by the minister and say that we are anxiously awaiting the details of the proposal.

We'll be guided by two principles, Minister. One is clearly that in regard to things that we can do in Ontario to assist our — I don't like to use the jargon — world-class financial community to grow and be competitive globally you will find support from our caucus. We are fortunate in Ontario to have financial institutions that can compete globally, and it is a unique benefit. We'll also be guided by a second principle, and that is making sure the consumer has adequate, reasonable protection. Those two things will be the two principles we'll be guided by.

We were expecting that the announcement today might have dealt with the Ontario Securities Commission, which also is of significant interest to Ontario and in particular to our financial community, in that I know in the budget you indicated your plan to proceed to some form of national commission, and for whatever reason that seems to be stalled. The problem we have is that the securities commission appears to be lacking —

Hon Mr Eves: Then ask the question.

Mr Phillips: The minister is saying, "Ask a question." I suggest to you, Minister, that it's your responsibility to come forward with solutions. We certainly, on a daily basis, hear of a lack of resources at the Ontario Securities Commission. You talk about protection of consumers. It

is being jeopardized, we gather from reports, by a lack of resources, that the provincial government is taking, I gather, \$30 million or \$40 million more from the commission than it is allocating in terms of resources for that commission to make certain we protect the consumer.

As we look at these proposals, we expected today to see the minister acting on what we think is a serious problem at the securities commission, according to press reports. If it is not his intention to move forward with some form of a national securities commission, then get on with providing the resources at the securities commission to provide comfort to the investors in Ontario.

Hon Mr Eves: Then ask a question in question period. I'd love you to ask that question. Your federal counterparts seem to be dragging their feet.

Mr Phillips: I would just say to the financial community out there, the Minister of Finance is barracking across the hall at us, when we would like some answers from him on this. For us, it is a serious problem in our financial community right now that needs addressing.

1350

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I want to add my comments. On December 8, 1985, I was the minister responsible for bringing in the new loan and trust legislation that's currently in place. I should tell the minister that at that time there was great discussion across the country. New Brunswick adopted our particular legislation verbatim, including our typos. Alberta told us they had no interest in having and no need to have any further and additional regulation of their trust companies. I remember the minister of the day, Ms Elaine McCoy, telling me that it was an unnecessary intrusion into the financial community. You should know that several months after that, Alberta had the largest trust company failure in the history of this country and immediately started to scramble to get their legislation on a par with Ontario's.

I have no problem whatsoever with having one set of regulations for the trust industry. I think it would be a great move. My only caution is, make sure you don't go to the lowest common denominator instead of the highest common denominator. If we can get legislation that Ontario is happy with, that provides the necessary protection, great. The danger is that to get accord with all the other provinces they will want to in some way diminish consumer protection because they may feel that will inhibit their particular institutions from functioning and being competitive. I think the number one goal of this legislation has to be consumer protection.

If we can get unanimity across this country so we have regulations that are fair, that are stringent, that are accountable, that's a wonderful thing and I commend the minister, if he can do it. I wish him well. But having gone that route, I can tell you it is fraught with problems.

As I say, I don't think we should in any way give up the kind of consumer protection in the current legislation. If we can improve it, all well and good; if we can't, we should resist it.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm happy to respond initially on behalf of our caucus to the minister's announcement, to say that I think he will understand if we come at this with just a little bit of scepticism. We

certainly would support any genuine attempts by the government to eliminate overlap and duplication in any area, certainly in this one in terms of regulating the loan and trust industry.

But we have seen too many times those code words used for just simply getting out of the business of regulating, so we will look at this with some attention. Our finance critic will obviously follow this with some interest, as will our critic for economic development and trade.

We believe it is important to create a climate in this province where businesses are working efficiently and where consumers are indeed protected. If the scope and the intent of this move by the government is to simplify those procedures in a way that maintains the protection for consumers and at the same time streamlines the reporting mechanisms or the regulations as they apply to businesses and to loans and trusts, in principle that's certainly something we would welcome and support. It is very much in keeping with the efforts we took when we were the government to simplify processes for business in terms of moving towards a unified filing system for small businesses, and the next steps that now we're happy to see the government taking in terms of the reporting mechanisms, although I don't remember them giving us credit for that.

But it is happening, and we all of us want to see a climate in which business is being held accountable, in this case loan and trust companies. Also, where overlap can be eliminated between the provincial government and the federal government, that's something we would support in principle.

We would also ask that when this issue is looked at the ministry and the government do not forget that there are a number of outstanding issues in the whole banking industry and in the whole trust industry that businesses, small businesses in particular, have been raising, such as the access to capital. The member for Fort York has been doing some work in this area. We will be interested in making sure that as the government looks at trying to streamline these processes it is also making it more possible for small businesses, as the minister says, to have greater access to capital, because we know that at the heart of any recovery of our economy in this province lie small businesses.

It's important that the barriers that have continuously been put in the way of small businesses, particularly by banks and to a lesser extent by trust companies, also be addressed. We would look forward to seeing that issue addressed in this discussion as much as simply the streamlining of rules as they apply to loans and trust companies.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Like my colleague the member for Dovercourt, I generally support what the government is doing. As the member for Dovercourt and others have said, if we're able to simplify the process between the federal and provincial governments, it makes a lot of sense. It puts some certainty in the industry and is something we need to encourage.

With regard to the comment where you talk about putting "an end to an unnecessary layer of rules on trust companies," what's unnecessary and will consumers in

the end be protected? In your comments you alluded to that, that consumers would be protected, but I can tell you that our party, the New Democratic Party, will be watching that closely because we believe that banks, quite frankly, have had a pretty free hand on some of these issues, and we would not want to see the trust companies ending up in the same position as banks. They've had far more power than they should have had.

The other issue you talk about is that your parliamentary assistant, Isabel Bassett, is going to go into consultation with industry, business and consumers. Although I have confidence in your parliamentary assistant — she's a member with some integrity in this House — I wonder how seriously the process is going to be taken by the government, because up to now you have not been very good about listening, to be blunt. On all of the issues the government has dealt with, it's been an attempt to look as if you're consulting, but in the end the government does what it wants and really doesn't listen to the public. I hope that you take the recommendations of Isabel Bassett seriously and that you give her the power she needs to go out and do meaningful consultation so that the needs and concerns of consumers and industry and business are brought back to the table, and that you act on those. We'll be watching for that.

The last point you make is in regard to the government generally "improving the climate for business and job creation in Ontario." Read the notes. Retail sales are down dramatically in Ontario over the last couple of months, even with your big tax break that you gave last June, and unemployment is up. All stats are proving that the revolution in Ontario is dragging the economy down, not pushing the economy up. I remind the minister that things are not well in Ontario under the Common Sense Revolution.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to remind all members that signs are out of order in this place. We will remember that.

VISITOR

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I would like the Speaker to recognize that a former member, Mr Ross McClellan, is in the chamber today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Welcome.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): My question is for the Minister of Health. Mr Speaker, I'm wearing a button which states, "Patients Matter," something the Minister of Health seems to have forgotten.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I'm not going to say that, but you're not supposed to wear buttons or put up signs. That's the deal. No, you go right ahead.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Does that button say, "Patients Matter"?

Ms Castrilli: It says, "Patients Matter." Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for that clarification.

Yesterday in the House this minister stated that it is "obvious to all members of the public, and certainly to members of this House, that patients come first." Thus the button. "That's been the theme and the thrust of everything we've done as a government." Is that still your position?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Yes.

Ms Castrilli: The minister, however, by his actions proves otherwise. He speaks one thing but does another. We have, as a result of the minister's cuts yesterday, both the Peterborough Civic Hospital and St Joseph's Health Centre announcing that they will be closing 32 acute care beds and reducing operating time. On top of that, 97 staff will lose their jobs, 46 of whom are nurses, the people who care for patients. The local hospital boards issued a media release in which they state that this government's cuts will, and I'll quote, "ultimately lead to fewer admissions, shorter lengths of stay and noticeable differences" — noticeable differences — "in the care which is available at the two hospitals." Does the minister not agree and recognize that his cuts in Peterborough will harm patient care?

Hon Mr Wilson: I was in Peterborough last week and had a chance to speak with a group of about 11 physicians who fully explained to me the restructuring initiatives that the community is undertaking to improve its hospital system. I can absolutely guarantee you that the press release you have says neither that quality will suffer nor that services are going to diminish and patient care will suffer. The confidence that these physicians and hospital administrators who were present had inspired me to conclude that Peterborough was well on its way to doing the type of restructuring that's required in the hospital system throughout the province.

Ms Castrilli: I find that unbelievable. The hospital says clearly that there will be noticeable differences in the care patients will receive. Those are the words of the hospital boards. It's obvious that patients don't matter to this minister. The only thing he cares about is finding the dollars and cutting them from our hospitals. Peterborough is not alone, it would not surprise you to hear. There are stories now of up to 50 beds that will be closed at the hospital in Belleville.

Clearly the minister was not thinking of patients when he promised a 30% tax cut; he was not thinking of patients when he slashed \$1.3 billion from hospitals, a move that will result in 15,000 nurses being laid off across Ontario; and he certainly was not thinking of patients when he cut a deal with the doctors that will force patients to pay out of pocket for medical services now covered by OHIP. I ask the minister again, is it more important to fund a tax cut than it is to ensure that patients can get the care they need and deserve? Will he not admit that money matters more than patients matter?

Hon Mr Wilson: The tax cut is a very important part of the government's policy and it's an important part of health policy. As you know, one of the greatest of the five determinants of health is employment. The tax cut is our way of creating jobs in this province. Employed people tend to be healthier people. Therefore, I fully

endorse the approach the government has taken to the whole comprehensive package of patient care, which includes an increased health budget, contrary to what your federal cousins are doing in Ottawa, where they've cut health care in this country, and particularly to Ontario, to shameful levels. We've increased the budget against all odds.

Secondly, the employment of more people, which will happen as a result of the tax cut, is definitely good for health care, for the system and for the individuals, and it for the most part prevents people from becoming patients in the first place, because employed people are healthier people.

Ms Castrilli: I wonder if people from Peterborough and Belleville will actually believe that.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): My next question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Tell her to wake up.

Ms Castrilli: If I might have her attention, while my first question tried to point out to the government that patients do not matter to it, my next question will show that there is at least one political party in Ontario that believes that people matter.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Nepean, come to order, please.

Ms Castrilli: I'll be more specific: People matter to this party. This week Ontarians are celebrating Library Week. The minister plans to celebrate by bringing in legislation to curtail access to public libraries and by charging user fees. Yesterday your parliamentary assistant said that libraries play —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Put the question.

Ms Castrilli: I'm trying, but it's very difficult.

The Speaker: Put the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If the member for Sudbury would go to his seat and heckle, it would make him more in order. To the member for Downsview, you have 15 seconds. Put the question.

Ms Castrilli: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Yesterday, the minister's parliamentary assistant said that libraries play a vital role in helping people learn and grow. I'd like to ask the minister whether she believes that the move to bring in user fees and the statement made by the parliamentary assistant are not in contradiction to one another.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): No, I don't believe they are. This government is committed to a very strong province-wide public library system. We have been consulting with the library community in the last nine months to look at the whole issue of governance and user fees, and we'll be coming up with some recommendations in due course.

Ms Castrilli: The only reason libraries are being forced to consider bringing in user fees is because of this government's 40% cut to library transfers last year. Let

me list some of the other cuts. Cuts to libraries are also forcing them to lay off staff, close branches and reduce opening hours. They are now locking the door to people's access to information, information they will need if we are ever to achieve our goal of lifelong learning. Every government since Confederation has believed that providing full and accessible libraries is in the public interest and is a basic good. Does the minister agree that libraries are the great equalizer, that whether rich or poor, people should be given that right to read and to learn without being charged to rent a book?

Hon Ms Mushinski: I want to reiterate that this government is committed to a very strong province-wide library system. That's what we're working towards. My ministry is committed to working with the library community to identify ways by which it can become more effective and more efficient to ensure that we continue to have a province-wide system for all of the communities in Ontario, including those remote communities in the north.

1410

Ms Castrilli: Books are the keys to knowledge and this government is closing the doors.

But there's something even more disturbing. That is, in addition to considering charging for borrowing books, the cuts to libraries are forcing them to sell their buildings off as corporate advertising space. We may very well soon see outside the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library something that says "Export 'A' Library," or "Pizza Pizza Library."

This Library Week the minister has been making announcements and speeches on the great importance that libraries play in our society. If the minister really believes what she reads, if she really believes what she says, won't she return the 40% cut to libraries, and won't she open the doors of libraries to people of all economic background, and won't she please accept the fact that people matter more than money?

Hon Ms Mushinski: I can certainly assure you that the last time I was at the public library the doors were open, and the doors will continue to be open.

As I have said, when municipalities are funding in excess of 90% of the operating budgets of public libraries in this province, they have asked us to provide them with the tools by which they can become more self-sufficient. Certainly the Metro reference library announcement to seek private-public partnerships is an excellent example of what they're doing: doing just that to keep their doors open to the public.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I wanted to ask this question of the Premier, but once again the Premier is not here, so I'll have to go to the Minister of Labour.

Exactly one year ago, your government rammed through your "progressive" view, you say, of labour law. Everybody else in the province said they are the most regressive changes and the most regressive attack on working people we've seen in 30 years.

We warned you at the time that it was going to provoke people out there in the public, and it has. It's

provoked days of protest in London, in Hamilton, in Kitchener, in Peterborough and here in Toronto now. It's also provoked all sorts of situations on the picket line. Today, here in gallery, there are 90 members of the Steelworkers who have been on strike at S.A. Armstrong in Scarborough. They've been on strike because the employer has followed your encouragement and has brought in scabs to take their work away. This matter could have been settled months ago, but because your government encourages scabs, it hasn't been settled.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question.

Mr Hampton: I want you to tell these workers here today, Minister, why did you pass a law which encourages scabs to come in and take their work away? Why do you encourage scabs in the workplace?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I want to tell the leader of the third party that as a result of the passage of Bill 7 last year, we have a very positive economic climate in this province. In fact we have 99,000 more people employed today than we had one year ago. That is 70% of the new jobs that have been created in Canada. That is a very positive number.

We are continuing to see optimism among the employer community. I would just indicate to you that 92% of the business people who have been interviewed believe that the business climate is going to get better or stay the same in 1998. Those are the individuals who are creating the jobs, the jobs that you say are important for people in the province. I would just indicate to you that Bill 7 has had a very positive economic impact on the lives of people in this province.

Mr Hampton: I am not surprised by the answer. There was not one mention of workers who are seeing scabs cross picket lines. There was not one mention of the kinds of confrontations you have created, not one mention of the kinds of hardship you are creating out there.

The fact of the matter is that as a result of your legislation, the amount of time lost to strikes and lockouts in this province has gone up four times. It's gone up from 354,000 lost days to over 1.38 million lost days. That doesn't even take into account the CAW strike at GM and it doesn't take into account the CUPE strike in the Niagara Peninsula, which is a strike against your cuts.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again: 1.38 million lost days due to the kind of confrontation you have provoked. What do you have to say to these people? Many of them have worked 10 or 20 years for S.A. Armstrong —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Look at the people in the gallery you are beating up.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Labour.

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the leader of the third party, what I have to say to you is that despite the fact that there had been predictions that there would be chaos in the province because of the huge number of collective agreements that were going to expire this year, almost 4,000 —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane North, you're out of order. You're out of your seat. You're going to have to come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate to the leader of the third party that despite the fact that there were these predictions, we continue to enjoy a climate in this province where the majority of collective agreements are peacefully resolved. In fact, in the first eight months of this year we only had 79 strikes. When you were in office during the same period you had 110.

Mr Hampton: Once again, only a Conservative Minister of Labour would brag about 1.38 million person-days lost to strikes and lockout. Only a Conservative Minister of Labour would brag about that kind of statistic.

I still haven't received an answer from the Minister of Labour. This is about real people. This is about real people who are simply trying to defend the wages they have worked hard for. This is about real people trying to defend their pensions. This is about real people trying to defend some control over their working conditions. That's why they're on strike. They only want what every average, ordinary person in Ontario would want: the chance to work at their job, the chance to enjoy a decent wage, the chance to have some control over their working conditions, yet your government is denying them that. Your government is more and more encouraging the use of scabs to drive down the wages of working people and to drive down the working conditions of people.

The Speaker: Put the question.

Mr Hampton: Would you tell these people, many of whom have 10 or 20 years' seniority, why you're doing that to them?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the leader of the third party, first of all, I want to make it abundantly clear to you that one strike is one strike too many. The very reason we introduced Bill 7 was to restore the balance in labour relations. We introduced democracy into the workplace, we introduced the secret ballot vote, and I would indicate to you now that employees have the opportunity to cast a secret ballot for —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, one strike is one strike too many. I would simply continue and indicate to you that we are seeing, as a result of the legislation we have introduced, real growth in the province. However, I would also indicate to you that the reason we're seeing more days lost in strikes this year, let's be perfectly honest, is the OPSEU strike. That's what has created the additional number of days lost.

1420

Getting back to the economic outlook, there is an indication that this year we are seeing more business plant construction in this province. We've had six quarters where we've seen nothing but success. That's going to translate into more jobs, and it won't be 10,000 lost like you lost; it will be hundreds and thousands more jobs because of the policies we have introduced.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: This is all about what business wants, not about what is good for workers and what workers want. That's very clear from your answers. It's very clear whose side you're on.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Labour as well. It concerns the issue of workplace health and safety. On September 24, less than a month ago, the minister said in a speech that as part of the government's plans to make prevention part of the Workers' Compensation Board mandate, the functions and staff of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency have been integrated into the WCB.

But these staff members, with more than 200 years of health and safety experience and expertise, were shocked on October 10, when they were told they would all receive layoff notices either this month or in December.

Minister, I'm not sure I understand. You say prevention is important. You say these people are going to be integrated into the Workers' Compensation Board. Can you tell us what's happening? Why would you be laying these people off if prevention is important? Why would you lay off 200 years of health and safety experience and expertise if prevention is important?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would indicate to the leader of the third party, getting back to where he was coming from, that we're creating jobs. If we take a look at the issue you've just mentioned, you know we are talking about an operational WCB issue. We're talking about two unions which are involved in discussions. Much of the issue you were just talking about needs to be resolved internally by the people who work at the WCB.

Mr Hampton: You can try to put this off and say that this is something the union has to sort out. The fact of the matter is that CUPE and the OPEIU have held meetings, and CUPE Local 1750 agreed at a meeting on Monday to welcome the agency's staff into their union if they become Workers' Compensation Board employees.

It's now up to you, Minister. Are you going to lay off 200 years of health and safety expertise and experience or are you going to do what you said on September 24? Are you going to take those people into the Workers' Compensation Board so that real occupational health and safety work can continue? It's up to you now.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate one more time to the leader of the third party that this is an internal operational matter that involves two unions. As far as I know, the issue is going to be resolved internally.

Mr Hampton: It's a very simple question. These people worked at the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. You shut that agency down. You said back in September that you would take them into the Workers' Compensation Board so that good occupational health and safety work could continue, so that work in terms of preventing accidents and deaths in the workplace could continue. The unions have sorted out their issues. When are you going to announce that all of these people are going to continue to have jobs and will continue to make an important contribution to workers' health and safety in Ontario? The ball is in your court. When are you going to make the announcement?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me just mention one more time that this is an internal WC matter. It is an issue that needs to be resolved between the two unions, I under-

stand it is being resolved and no one at all is being laid off at the present time. For you to indicate that anybody is being laid off at the present time, you know that's not true.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday in this House the member for Eglinton stood up and praised the city of Toronto, in fact took credit for the city of Toronto being named the best city in the world. Also, a colleague on your side stood up and praised the city of Etobicoke for being a great city.

I find it astonishing that there's a report in the paper that says your ministry official — I'm not quite sure; it could be Crombie, whatever he's doing, who may be the real Minister of Municipal Affairs or the phantom minister — is planning to abolish the six local governments and establish a mega-Metro. Minister, is Mr Crombie doing this with your approval? Are you going to abolish local government in Metro?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We're planning to eliminate duplication and waste that occurs at all levels of government: this government, municipal governments and regional governments. We're looking at a number of options as to what direction the GTA and Metro should go in. There haven't been any decisions made as yet. The option the member mentioned is obviously one of them, but it's only one.

Mr Colle: When will we be able to question Mr Crombie? When will the real Minister of Municipal Affairs come before a committee? Even your own caucus is wondering who is running your ministry. Here we go with your own colleagues saying, "It's a great city and we have great local government." How could you be planning — your officials are even drawing up the maps — to abolish local government? In fact they're saying you've made a deal with Mel Lastman, or maybe Crombie has, to make him the supermayor of mega-Metro. Who's in charge, you or Mr Crombie? How do we get at Mr Crombie?

Hon Mr Leach: Mr Crombie has been appointed as chair of the Who Does What panel to provide this government with advice. The panel is made up of community experts from across Ontario. Mr Crombie's panel does not make any decisions; it makes recommendations. All decisions that happened in the past were made by this government and they will continue to be made by this government.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. I have in my hand a news release from the WCB announcing that there will be a 5% cut in the employer assessment, the premiums that employers pay to WCB, dropping them to the lowest rate since 1986.

Interestingly the news release doesn't talk about how much this \$6-billion gift to your employer friends will add to the unfunded liability. As you know, the unfunded

liability, which has no taxpayer money in it — it's entirely funded by employers — has been dropping steadily for the last two years, since the NDP legislation was brought in, which was opposed by your party and the Liberals. But despite this decrease in the unfunded liability, you continue to use this as an excuse to go after disabled workers and take away \$15 billion of benefits to those injured workers.

The Cam Jackson report estimated that the \$6-billion giveaway to your employer friends would increase the unfunded liability to \$18 billion. Minister, will you confirm that the gift to your friends is going to increase the unfunded liability to \$18 billion?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): We are preparing to reform the WCB and at the end of the day we're going to have a system that does indeed deal with the needs of both the employer and the employee community. We will continue to be able to provide the needed benefits to the injured workers, and at the end of the day as well we are going to reduce the assessment rates that are paid by the employer community, because as you know, our assessment rates are presently the second-highest in Canada. It's going to make us more competitive.

1430

Mr Christopherson: The reality is that to pay for this \$6-billion gift to your corporate friends, you're going to take away \$15 billion from injured workers. The cabinet document that I leaked a couple of weeks ago shows very clearly that's what your intent is. At the end of the day, what you're going to do is have your employer friends have more money, not just from the tax cut but from this premium cut, and disabled workers in this province will have less than they deserve.

Minister, you are also not committing to holding province-wide public hearings yet on that WCB legislation. You just today, I understand, through a news release before the House, announced that the occupational health clinics will be staying open. We're going to take a lot of credit for that because it was the labour movement and our party and injured workers that fought that issue and said to you, "You will not close those clinics." I say to you now that you're afraid to hold province-wide public hearings on the WCB changes because you're afraid that you'll have to bow again to public pressure.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, I'm asking you two things: (1) Will you commit to province-wide public hearings before you ram through that legislation, and (2) until that is done, will you reverse this \$6-billion gift to your friends?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm very pleased to indicate to the member opposite that yes, there has been a news release issued today and we will continue to support the occupational health clinics, after a very thorough investigation of the clinics, which actually you people had supported when you set up the royal commission yourself. We have now done our evaluation and we have determined that they will continue to operate.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): While I'm standing, if you'd please stop the clock, we have the ex-member for Willowdale, Mr Gino Matrondola, in the public galleries today. Welcome.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. My constituents high atop Hamilton Mountain have been following with great interest the ongoing discussions between the region of Hamilton-Wentworth and the local municipalities regarding the restructuring initiatives, and as you know, resolutions have been passed by the region and the city of Hamilton detailing their proposed ideas. Would you provide us with an update on the Hamilton governance issue?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for his question. It is true that this ministry is actively monitoring the discussions in Hamilton-Wentworth. I met yesterday with the mayor of Hamilton and with the chair of the region. The mayor and the regional chair have requested that the province provide some assistance to resolve their impasse, and I have agreed to do so.

As I have said in the past many times, I would prefer a solution that is supported by local citizens and not one imposed by the province, and I still do, but we will send in some help for them.

Mr Pettit: I too have been pushing for a local solution, because it seems to me the last thing we wanted was a solution imposed by the province. But we've obviously reached an impasse locally. Therefore, if the province is prepared to get involved, would you please tell the people of Hamilton Mountain and all the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth exactly in what manner?

Hon Mr Leach: I'd like to thank all the members from Hamilton-Wentworth, as a matter of fact, for their interest in this issue. The government intends to appoint a mediator to help in this issue. The terms of reference are now being developed. I hope the mediator will be in place as early as next week. Again, I would like to stress that the province would like to see a local solution worked out between the political leaders of Hamilton-Wentworth, and hopefully the mediator will assist them in doing that.

ONTARIO-QUEBEC CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AGREEMENT

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My question is to the Minister of Labour, l'honorable Elizabeth Witmer. On October 10 you told Ontarians that the Ontario-Quebec construction labour issue was resolved, and on the same day, at the Ottawa Construction Association gathering, you said an agreement in principle was reached with the Quebec government.

Last week, I asked you a question but I did not get an answer, so I will put the question as simply as possible, and this time I hope I will get a straight answer. Minister, Ontario workers and contractors are still waiting and,

honestly, we all have doubts about Quebec respecting any agreement. They have sidestepped agreements in the past. We all know what happened in the 1994 agreement, and once again Quebec has managed to gain some time and seemingly calm the unrest that was brewing up in Ontario. Can you tell us how you will assure Ontarians that Quebec will respect this agreement without having this government introduce any new legislation?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): To the member opposite, I am aware of the fact that you have met with our staff today and I appreciate the concerns that you are bringing forward on behalf of your constituents. Certainly we are all concerned, because of what has happened in the past, that we continue to work forward as aggressively as we can to make sure that the terms of the agreement are implemented. My officials, as I have said to you before, are working with the officials in Quebec to ensure that come January 1, 1996, the terms that we have put in place will be operational and we will have a more level playing field which will enable our workers and our contractors to gain access into the province of Quebec.

Mr Lalonde: I would like to ask the minister how her government intends to recognize such trades as labourer, plasterer and painter. In a recent statement, the minister said that Quebec will recognize these trades. To my knowledge, there is no way to recognize these three specific trades, other than taking the worker's word. What will be the Quebec criteria for issuing a competency card to labourers, plasters and painters, and what will be the criteria that the Ontario government will use to recognize these three trades?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Those are exactly the types of issues that are now being resolved. The criteria are being established and that is the work that is now ongoing between the officials in Quebec and the officials in Ontario. As I indicated to you, it is certainly our hope, and we know it will happen, that come January 1, all of those issues will have been resolved, the criteria determined, and we will be able to move into Quebec and compete there for jobs on a level playing field.

GO TEMPORARY HELP SERVICES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Your government's attack on workers continues; it seems to know no bounds. You have just recently sent out layoff notices to about 2,100 GO Temp workers, mostly women and people from visible minorities, because you have decided to privatize the GO Temp service in the government of Ontario. What you're doing with this is that you are taking money that is being used now to pay a decent wage to these 2,100 people and you are saying that in privatizing, 42% of that money is going to go to the private temp agencies, most of which are American companies. The workers are being told that if they want to have any hope of keeping their jobs, they should just register with one of these companies. At best, they can hope to get a salary that's about half of what they're making today.

Minister, what I want to ask you is, why are you so intent on putting 2,100 people out of work, mainly women and people from visible minorities, so that private

American companies, temporary agencies, can get the benefit of those profits?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): As the member opposite knows, this government has undertaken on behalf of the taxpayers and the people of Ontario to look at all of the services that are delivered internally. One of those services is the GO Temp agency. 1440

The Go Temp agency within the provincial government delivers clerical and secretarial services and many other kinds of services on a temporary basis to all the various ministries. The charge last year to the various ministries was over \$42 million. That's the kind of cost that's associated to the taxpayers of Ontario for this service.

This government believes that through other, alternative means of delivering this service, we can reduce that considerably. The objective in particular, I might say, is we believe at least \$5 million a year can be saved to the taxpayers of Ontario, and yet the service will be a good service, an even better service, to the various ministries. That basically is what this is all about: saving the taxpayers considerable expense.

Mr Silipo: Minister, you know better than I this is not about saving money; this is not about providing better service. If it was about providing better service, you would listen to the people in the Premier's own office who, we understand, are singing the praises of the GO Temp agency that you are now in the process of shutting down. This is from your own Premier's office.

If you're so interested in saving money and in continuing to provide the high quality of services that these GO Temp employees provide, why have you set up the request for proposals in such a way that you have not considered, and you will not make possible the consideration of, the employees themselves to bid for this contract?

What I want to ask you is, if you are serious about continuing to provide the high quality of service and not simply transferring money from the wages of workers into the profits of corporations, will you reconsider at least that element of allowing employees to bid for this contract, reopen the contract process and let the present employees who are interested in bidding and showing you that they can save money and keep the process in place and keep the jobs there bid for that contract?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite may not consider a \$5-million-a-year saving to the taxpayer to be significant, but I can tell you that this government is looking at all alternatives.

In terms of the specific question, the members from GO Temp are certainly permitted to be involved in the tender process. The tender process closed on September 30. The employees would be welcome to be involved. Indeed many of the employees registered in GO Temp are also registered with other agencies, and in the final analysis my suspicion is that many of them will be achieving employment with the province of Ontario through those agencies.

It was an open process, a fair tender process with considerable interest, and it will involve a \$5-million saving, at least, to the taxpayers of Ontario. I think that's the proper way to go.

ONTARIO BREAST SCREENING PROGRAM

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, I was very pleased to learn last week that Barrie's Royal Victoria Hospital has been selected as a site for the expansion of the Ontario breast screening program. My constituents are very excited about these enhanced services for women in my community. Could you provide us with details as to what these new services will include?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'm very pleased to respond to the question from the honourable member for Simcoe Centre, my neighbouring riding. Indeed, Royal Victoria Hospital will be selected as one of the new sites for breast screening as part of the \$24.3-million announcement that the Premier and I, on behalf of the government and all members here, made just recently.

We want to encourage women aged 50 years and older to enter the program, to register with the program and to have regular breast screening. The program specifically offers a mammogram to women, special instruction with respect to breast self-examination and a complete breast physical examination by a specially trained nurse.

In addition to the honourable member's indication of Barrie being one of the sites that we've identified so far, there also will be new sites in Chatham, Sarnia —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: — Listowel, Niagara Falls, St Catharines, Belleville, Trenton, Ottawa, Timmins and Bracebridge, and honourable members will note that this creates new jobs for highly trained nurses in this province.

Mr Tascona: Thank you, Minister. This is unquestionably great news for the residents of Simcoe Centre and for the other new sites across the province which you've outlined.

As I understand from your recent announcement, the government has committed to the establishment of additional sites for the future. What guidelines can you provide us with in respect to the time frame for these next steps?

Hon Mr Wilson: The 11 sites, including the city of Barrie, have already been notified that they're the preferred sites with respect to the tender that went out, the request for proposals, and the Ontario Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, which coordinates the Ontario breast screening program, will be putting out another request for proposals. The announcement the Premier made of \$23.4 million is to ensure that we have some 30 new sites established over the next four years. The details of the next round of site selection will be available, I hope, very shortly from the research foundation, and we'll get on with the job of increasing what has become an extremely valuable program to the women of this province.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I would like to quote from a document called the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Development. It was produced in

November 1994, well before the government members held the seats they now have, so just as an excerpt to refresh their memories, beneath the subtitle "Ministry Funding," the report says: "Under a Mike Harris government, agriculture will regain its fair share of government support. That is why there are no cuts to agriculture programs in our policy plan, the Common Sense Revolution."

Minister, is it your opinion that a clear promise was made by yourself and your Premier Mike Harris, prior to coming into power, that you would make no cuts to agriculture? Simply a yes or no would suffice.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Cornwall for that question because he well knows there have been no cuts to agricultural programs. As a matter of fact, there's about \$35 million of new money: \$15 million in Grow Ontario and a rebate of the provincial sales tax of over \$20 million. So there have been no cuts to programs; in fact there are new programs.

Mr Cleary: I would just like to reminisce a little with the minister about the last 16 months. He cancelled the dairy audit program; cut the investment strategy program; reduced the tile drainage program; closed or amalgamated nine field offices; closed the Brighton veterinary lab; cancelled the Niagara tender fruit program and the agricultural museum funding; he has offloaded on commodity groups; he has wiped out lab and research programs; he has reduced international marketing programs; he has cut the municipal drainage program; and cut the funding for Foodland Ontario promotion — \$85 million in cuts. I know he reannounced two ethanol plans and the farm tax rebate, but Minister, the estimates really show that there was \$480 million in agriculture and now approximately \$421 million, a reduction of 12%.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Mr Cleary: When you were in opposition, you were so critical that agriculture did not get its fair share. How can you possibly say that you have not violated your election promise when the balance sheet shows you have?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: As a matter of fact, as we speak, we have some Japanese investors buying Ontario soybeans — not just signing and hedging; they're buying Ontario soybeans.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I'm sure the honourable members in opposition would like to know this. For the first six months, we have had a 14% increase in agrifood exports from Ontario. I'm very pleased that the honourable member for Cornwall recognizes \$3 million to an ethanol facility in his riding, another \$5 million to an ethanol facility in Chatham. Mr Speaker, I recently —

The Speaker: The question has been answered. Order.

1450

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement. Monsieur le Ministre, votre agent, M. Crombie, président

de la commission Qui fait quoi, traite présentement la question, qui va livrer quels services entre la province et les municipalités ? On entend des rumeurs que les services en français vont être affectés par ce changement. Pourquoi ? Parce que la Loi 8 sur les services en français ne s'applique pas aux municipalités. Si la prestation des services est transférée aux municipalités, l'accès aux services en français ne sera pas garanti.

Ma question est simplement celle-ci : quelle assurance pouvez-vous donner à la population francophone de la province qu'elle pourra continuer à être desservie dans sa propre langue suite à un tel transfert de responsabilités ?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I believe the duly elected representatives who are elected to municipal office are responsible people, and I think if they have a responsibility for delivering those services, they would continue to deliver them.

M. Bisson : Vous manquez complètement la question. La question, c'est que présentement dans la province de l'Ontario, on a un «act» sous le ministre responsable des affaires francophones qui dit qu'on doit servir les francophones d'une région desservie sous la Loi 8. Si on transfère les services directement aux municipalités, la loi ne s'applique pas à eux. On vous demande, en tant que ministre responsable pour les services qui vont être transférés aux municipalités, allez-vous donner une assurance que lorsque les services qui sont faits directement pour les francophones, en français, retombent sur les municipalités, ils seront livrés tels qu'ils sont avec les services provinciaux ?

Hon Mr Leach: I can assure the honourable member across that we have no intention of affecting the delivery of French services anywhere in the province. If services are presently delivered to any municipality in the province, then I can assure the member that they will continue to be delivered.

AGRIFOOD EXPORTS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I understand that agriculture and food products from this province are being exported all around the world and that one of our goals is to significantly increase our agrifood exports in Ontario. Could the minister update us on where we stand with our agrifood shipments for 1996?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I wish to thank the honourable member for Oxford for his question, and it's a very timely question. Yes, our exports of agrifood products from Ontario are well over \$2.6 billion in the first half and will be some 15% improved over last year. Indeed we are very proud.

When I was in the Pacific Rim in April, I invited a number of groups, and they have come over here and are purchasing Ontario pork, Ontario beans, Ontario tobacco, Ontario ice wine and many other products. So we are very proud of what we've been doing in agriculture.

Mr Hardeman: Thank you for the update. Could you please tell us what regions account for the biggest increase in agrifood exports?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The agrifood exports primarily are going to be in grains. The United States is still our major purchaser. However, the Pacific Rim is now a very important player, as is eastern Europe and as is all of Europe in both the red meats and the grains, and we are very pleased to see double-digit increases in our exports.

ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. One of your predecessor's slash-and-burn decisions was to shut down all of the regional testing labs of the Ministry of Environment. As you know, water testing was one of the services they provided. The assurance was given, when concern was raised about that: "Don't worry. The private sector will step in. Private labs will provide the service."

I wasn't so sure of that, so I wrote and asked your ministry if they would provide me with information as to what private labs would step in in Thunder Bay and what they would charge. I now have that information, Minister, and I think you should be aware that of the 27 tests that were formerly done by the regional lab in Thunder Bay, only two could be done at a comparable cost by the more competitive bid. Some 16 of those tests will cost more than double what the cost was in the ministry lab, and one of them will be five times as much.

I wonder if you were aware of this, and I wonder if you're looking at these facts. Do you know how much this rush to privatization is going to cost?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Yes, I'm aware of that.

Mrs McLeod: My supplementary question relates back to the issue of increased costs, and the burden they would be for small business people like trailer court owners, raised with the minister about two weeks ago by my colleague from Kenora. That may be why the minister is now aware of it. I believe the minister said, in response to my colleague at the time, "We're going to look at some ways of helping them with those costs."

I have another letter addressed to me, also from your ministry, which makes it quite clear that one way you are going to help people with those additional costs incurred because of your privatization move is to reduce the level of water sampling that is required.

The auditor has already said that we have a real problem with water testing and water quality. We have already had a serious outbreak related to water quality. I don't know how you can possibly consider reducing the water testing that is done in this province. Will you give us an assurance that you are not going to reduce the level of water testing and further damage water quality to pay for your privatization moves?

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm quite willing to look into that.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday we passed Bill 49, the bill to change the Employment Standards Act. You have steadfastly maintained that you

have not taken away any rights in that bill. I want to ask you a very straightforward question.

Given the fact that workers now can only claim back for six months, not two years, that there will be a minimum threshold — you haven't told us what it is — and that there will be a cap on how much workers can claim when they've had money taken from them by employers, I want to know how you can stand in your place, in the face of that evidence, and still maintain that you haven't taken away workers' rights in the Employment Standards Act.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): It was not yesterday but on Monday of this week that we had an opportunity to pass Bill 49. We are now embarking on the task of totally reviewing the Employment Standards Act. That has not been done since 1974. Certainly our intention is to ensure that vulnerable workers are protected.

We are going to establish basic standards. We are going to take a look at what sectors need to be covered by the Employment Standards Act. As you know, there are emerging sectors, such as in the field of tele-marketing, and I would indicate to you that if you take a look at Bill 49, the legislation that has just been passed, we have done exactly what we said we would do: We have made sure that as a result of the changes we've made there has been no change to any minimum standards. However, we have made it easier and quicker for employees to obtain money owed to them.

Mr Christopherson: That is the difficulty we have with this government. No matter what we point out as the truth, you're prepared to stand up and say exactly the opposite.

I'd like you to answer my question, Minister. It's a very straightforward one. Please address yourself to my question. I am calling you on whether or not you've taken away rights. In that bill, workers cannot claim for two years any more, only six months. I say that's a takeaway. Your bill now will have a minimum threshold where one doesn't exist now. I say that's taking away rights. Your bill will put a cap on how much workers can claim. I claim that's a takeaway of workers' rights. I want you to either stand in your place and say that I am wrong factually or finally admit that you have taken away workers' rights in the Employment Standards Act.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As a result of the changes we have made, we are now ensuring that workers have access and will be able to get the money owed to them much more quickly. That's what we've done.

1500

Mr Christopherson: You can't answer the question, can you? You sit there and take away workers' rights and say you're not. It's disgusting, absolutely disgusting. She's laughing; she thinks this is a big joke.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Hamilton Centre, please come to order. The question will be answered by the Minister of Labour and then we're finished with question period.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I realize there is an audience today.

I would certainly indicate again to the member opposite that what we have done is something that enhances

the rights of the most vulnerable workers in this province. We have ensured that the collection of the money owed to them is actually going to take place after you did away with the collection agency. We are going to privatize the function. I would indicate to you that at the end of the day, as a result of the changes we have made, workers are going to get their money, more of it, much more quickly than under the legislation you people had.

PETITIONS

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have the following petition signed by a number of residents of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I wonder if Andy Brandt signed that petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here from literally hundreds of people from the city of Timmins who protested the other day when Premier Harris came to Timmins. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has broken its election promises by slashing millions of dollars from the education budget;

"Whereas by slashing the education budget these cuts are resulting in larger classes, less help for special needs students, loss of junior kindergarten, fewer resources for the classroom and teachers to help students;

"Whereas by amalgamating school boards into super-boards community voice and needs will not be heard or addressed, resulting in a less dynamic and productive education system less reflective of individual community needs;

"Whereas should the future cuts continue, these will encourage the downward spiral of the present quality of education."

I've signed my name to this petition. It's signed by approximately 500 people.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario concerning drinking and driving.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives, while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail, and even then only for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and therefore affix my signature to it.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition from residents of my community who are concerned with the possible removal of rent control, and I wish to read it to the assembly.

"Whereas the government of Ontario has announced its intention to remove rent control from apartments that become vacant so that landlords can charge whatever rent they want; and

"Whereas the government's proposal will eliminate rent control on new buildings, and allow landlords to pass on repair bills and other costs to tenants; and

"Whereas the government's proposal will make it easier for landlords to demolish buildings and easier to convert apartments to condominiums; and

"Whereas due to the zero vacancy rate in Metro Toronto the removal of rent control will cause extreme hardship for seniors and tenants on fixed incomes and others who cannot afford homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to keep the existing system of rent control."

I concur with the intentions of the petitioners and I will affix my signature to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive petitions from thousands of workers all across Ontario, outraged at this government's ongoing attack on their health and safety and WCB rights.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

On behalf of my caucus, I add my name to theirs.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I rise today with another petition from the good people of Port Colborne concerning the seniors' driver exam.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the city of Welland is slated to close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Port Colborne and Wainfleet senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar and busy roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences to seniors,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Port Colborne and Wainfleet and that recognizes that when tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest place to assess driver ability."

Beneath the names of Kay Kelba and Morley Hindle of Port Colborne, I affix my signature to this petition.

MANDATORY INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I continue to get petitions from construction workers and miners, which say:

"To the Honourable Solicitor General and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

1510

POVERTY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here another petition, again from the same group of people, various people who were at the gathering to protest Mr Harris when he was in Timmins at a \$150-a-plate dinner last week, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 1996 is the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty;

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government has created a climate of poor-bashing by stereotyping poor people as lazy and blaming them for our social and economic problems;

"Whereas the message is reinforced through government policies, big business and the corporate media;

"Whereas Mike Harris's Tories have cut welfare, social programs, employment standards, job training and child care and created workfare;

"Whereas although big business profits are up, 57,000 have lost their jobs in the economy;

"Whereas social program spending actually accounts for very little of the deficit and debt problem;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon Premier Mike Harris, his government and the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop blaming the poor and bring an end to the legislated poverty in this province."

I affix my name to that petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have another set of petitions from legal owners and users of firearms who are concerned about ammunition restrictions.

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, placing restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario; and

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape; and

"Whereas the records for which these provisions have been produced as a result of the provisions of Bill 181 cannot reasonably be used to track criminals; and

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed in only one day, without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, who

understand and have a deep respect for the power of firearms and ammunition and the need to maintain and use their equipment in the safest of conditions; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the illegal use of ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal Bill 181, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against weapons offences."

I agree with this petition and therefore affix my name to it.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Minister of Labour, Premier of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system, including elimination of the bipartite board of directors, reduced temporary benefits, introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay, legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation and reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"Workers' compensation is not a handout, it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid. It is a legal obligation that employers have to employees, who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan.

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I add my signature to theirs.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to present yet another petition from the senior citizens, of this time, Fort Erie, Ontario, concerning the drivers' exams for seniors.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the town of Fort Erie has been closed as of September 24 and the centre in Niagara Falls will close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Fort Erie senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road tests on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences for seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Fort Erie and that recognizes that when tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest places to assess driver ability."

Beneath the names of Mr Mantle and Mr Putney, I affix my signature.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have been receiving thousands and thousands of petitions of this sort. This is to Premier Harris and to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Al Leach, and members of the Ontario Legislature.

"We, the undersigned, protest this government's actions against tenants described below.

"The Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants. Rent control allows for security and stability in their homes and communities. Uncontrolled rent increases leave tenants, their families and other communities open to eviction, personal distress, and contribute directly to social instability. We want this government to stop any actions that would allow uncontrolled rents.

"Further, this government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favourable to landlords for easier and faster evictions. This is unacceptable to Ontario tenants and damaging to Ontario's communities.

"This government also plans to get rid of public housing and has halted the creation of basement apartments and a new supply of affordable non-profit housing. These types of housing are necessary for low- and moderate-income tenants to obtain accommodation they can afford. The government must cease all actions that reduce the affordability and availability of these kinds of housing.

"This government has eliminated funding for United Tenants of Ontario, five municipal tenant federations and other important tenant services at a time when they're attacking all tenant rights. Funding for those groups must be reinstated so that Ontario's tenants and not just their landlords are able to bring their views to bear in government deliberations on tenants' rights and protection. A consultation process with tenants' organizations should be

initiated immediately to develop a plan for sustainable funding for services to tenants."

I will affix my signature in agreement with these tenants.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr Martiniuk from the standing committee on administration of justice presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 79, An Act to improve Ontario's court system, to respond to concerns raised by charities and their volunteers and to improve various statutes relating to the administration of justice / *Projet de loi 79, Loi visant à améliorer le système judiciaire de l'Ontario, à répondre aux préoccupations exprimées par les oeuvres de bienfaisance et leurs bénévoles, et à améliorer diverses lois relatives à l'administration de la justice.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 79 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Silipo from the standing committee on government agencies presented the committee's 22nd report and moved its adoption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Do you wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): These are recommending concurrence with the review of two appointees recommended which the committee reviewed this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1520

OPPOSITION DAY

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr Hampton moved opposition day motion number 3:

Whereas the struggles of working families in Ontario for the past 50 years have led to safer workplaces, improvements to working conditions and standards, greater economic justice for pensioners and injured workers, pay equity for women and a more prosperous Ontario; and

Whereas this year marks the 50th anniversary of such milestones as the historic strike by steelworkers at Stelco in Hamilton and the landmark strike by auto workers at Ford in Windsor; and

Whereas the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, opening this year in Hamilton, is focusing much-needed attention on the history of working people; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has launched a sustained attack on workers' rights; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has stripped rights from workers in the Labour Relations Act while encouraging employers to force strikes, incite violence and hire scabs, causing more days lost to strikes already this year in Ontario than at any time since the passage of Bill 40; and

Whereas striking workers — at S.A. Armstrong, General Motors, Niagara region and elsewhere — are under attack from their employers as a direct result of the Mike Harris government's actions; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government is preparing to take \$15 billion from injured workers and give \$6 billion to Ontario employers, undermining the long-standing compromise that guarantees full and fair workers' compensation in return for protecting employers from lawsuits; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government is threatening to close the Occupational Disease Panel and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers, while setting the stage for attacking the right to refuse unsafe work; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has pushed through amendments to the Employment Standards Act, under the guise of "housekeeping," that make it more difficult for vulnerable workers to defend their rights; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has begun the gutting of pay equity protection for women, while making plans for further attacks on pay equity in the current session; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has laid off hundreds of workers at the Ministry of Labour, including key staff in enforcement of employment standards and health and safety laws; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government has frozen Ontario's minimum wage, forcing down the standard of living of Ontario's most vulnerable workers while the US Congress has passed legislation raising the US minimum wage to a level higher than Ontario's; and

Whereas the Mike Harris government is driving down the standard of living of working families, while putting more money in the pockets of wealthy corporations and individuals, sharpening the divide between the haves and the have-nots; and

Whereas the Minister of Labour is, under the guise of creating "balance," taking power from unorganized and organized workers and putting more power in the hands of employers; and

Whereas the Minister of Labour rewrote the Ontario Labour Relations Act without a single day of public hearings, tried to roll back rights under the Employment Standards Act without public hearings and refuses to commit to full, province-wide public hearings on the drastic changes proposed to the Workers' Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act;

Therefore this House calls on the government to withdraw its proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act, scrap its proposed amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act, commit to full funding of the Occupational Disease Panel and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers, increase the Ontario minimum wage immediately and reinstate the ban on replacement workers in strikes and lockouts.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is indeed an important occasion in the Legislature. It's an important occasion because for 50 years working people across this province have struggled in Ontario to make this province a better place to live.

These include better working conditions, safer workplaces, greater economic justice for pensioners and injured workers, fairer pay for women. The result of all these gains has been a more prosperous Ontario for all. Workers have made Ontario a better place to live because of all the gains that working families have made.

But it is sad, as I just recounted for members of this House, to see that Ontario now has a government which is bent upon rolling back the clock, rolling back the clock to a time when working people did not have good workers' compensation coverage, when working people did not have the right to refuse unsafe work, rolling back the clock to a time when the minimum wage was below the poverty line, rolling back the clock to a time when workers are considered less than full partners in society, less than full partners in the economy. That is, sadly, what is happening at the behest and with the approval and with the active instigation of this government.

But we want to celebrate today what workers have achieved and then we want to point out just how wrong this government is. This year is the 50th anniversary of some of the most significant events in Ontario labour history, Canadian labour history and, I would argue, in world labour history: 1946 was the hot year of post-war labour solidarity which led to important advances for working families all across this province and all across Canada. Returning Second World War veterans refused to be told that there were no jobs for them, that there was no housing for them, that there was no training for them, that there was no work for them. Instead, they played a key role in fighting for better wages and better working conditions for everyone in this province.

In Hamilton, the strike by steelworkers at Stelco led to important gains and also inspired an enduring sense of community. In Windsor, the 1946 strike at Ford established a tradition of solidarity for the auto workers in Canada and was a first step towards much-improved wages and working conditions in the auto industry.

The Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton offers a salute to the achievements of working families in this province. The centre opens this fall in the historic Customs House in the north end of Hamilton. The centre features displays that portray the history of working people. It also serves as a clearinghouse and collecting point of information, recording workers' history before it is forgotten.

A conference hosted by the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre earlier this year attracted about 100 women and men to review critical moments in the history of Ontario workers, especially the landmark strikes of 50 years ago which established the compromise in Ontario society, the compromise that recognized things like a decent minimum wage, that recognized things like the right to strike, the right to organize, the right of trade unions to have a say in how our society is governed and the direction our society takes. It's an important event. It's an important event this year, this day, and the

opening of the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre is an important event for Ontario.

But, as I said earlier, it is very sad that the progress that has been made over the last 50 years is now under direct attack by this right-wing government. Working families in Ontario now face a new challenge: a government that is actively rolling back the gains that working families have struggled for throughout the post-war era.

Since taking office last year, the Harris Conservative government has launched a sustained attack on workers' rights. The Conservative government has stripped rights from workers in the Labour Relations Act, encouraging employers to force strikes, to hire scabs and to provoke confrontation on the picket line. In fact, through August, there were already 1.38 million person-days lost to lockouts and strikes in Ontario, up from just 354,000 in the same period last year. There were more days lost to lockouts and strikes in the first eight months of 1996 than in all three years that Bill 40 was in effect, from 1993 until 1995. The figures for 1996 don't even include the massive strike by the Canadian Auto Workers at General Motors or other current work stoppages such as the strike by CUPE workers in the Niagara region as a result of the Harris government's policies.

These figures also don't include the full impact of the strike by the United Steelworkers at S.A. Armstrong in Scarborough, where workers have been on the picket line since April, on the picket line trying to defend the wages they have struggled so long and so hard to earn; on the picket line trying to defend some control over their workplace; on the picket line trying to defend pensions; on the picket line trying to defend benefits. The employer, S.A. Armstrong, has followed the encouragement of the Harris Conservative government and has demanded major concessions from the workers and has brought in scabs to try to break the union. That is, sadly, what this Conservative government has encouraged and that is the kind of situation, the kind of labour relations this government is trying to encourage.

1530

Some of the S.A. Armstrong workers are in the gallery today. I'd like to see any member of the government try to explain to these steelworkers how the Harris Conservative government's labour laws have made Ontario better for them.

It's important to note that almost every one of the steelworkers who has worked at S.A. Armstrong has worked there for over 10 or 15 years; some have 20 years' seniority. They have been dedicated workers; they have helped to make S.A. Armstrong a productive company and a profitable company. Yet this government believes that it must conduct an attack on these workers and other workers in Ontario.

This will not work. This will not lead to a more productive Ontario. This will not lead to an Ontario that people are proud to live in and proud to be a part of. This is a march back into the past; it is a march back to the kind of labour relations that existed in this province before the Second World War; it is a march back into the kind of economy that people, sadly, experienced during the Great Depression. Unfortunately, this government will

force a lot of suffering on to a lot of people in this province before it discovers how wrong it is.

But there is much more to this Conservative government's anti-worker agenda. There is much more that they intend to do to drive down the standard of living of working people; for example, the workers' compensation and workplace health and safety. A major battleground this fall will be this government's plans to attack workplace health and safety and the Workers' Compensation Board.

Any doubts we had about where this government is heading disappeared when we started reading the 58-page leaked cabinet submission that we received via a brown envelope. The big picture is clear: The Harris Conservative government has a plan to take \$15 billion from injured workers and their families and give \$6 billion to some of the wealthiest employers in this province. In the process, the Conservatives are going to abolish the Occupational Disease Panel, complete the destruction of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and try to set the stage for its next step: an all-out assault on the right to refuse unsafe work.

The Conservative government says it will try to ram the WCB health and safety bill through the House in a matter of weeks. We want to serve notice now that ramming this kind of attack on workers through the House in a matter of a couple of weeks is totally unacceptable, totally unacceptable to people all over Ontario. We know that people all over Ontario will be demanding full, province-wide public hearings on these important changes, on these attacks on workers. I want to put the government on notice that if it thinks it's had a fight in the past over some of these things, nothing will compare to the fight it will have over workers' compensation and occupational health and safety. Nothing will compare to that fight.

Other highlights of the leaked cabinet document, though, tell a very sad story. The government plans would require that a worker consent to the release of his or her confidential medical information when applying for workers' compensation. Health care professionals, physicians, nurses and other health care workers advise strongly against making injured workers sign this blank cheque, because at the time the workers provided such consent, workers would have no reasonable understanding of the nature of the information that would be released following an assessment by the health professional.

I wonder how many members of the Conservative government would sign a consent for the release of their full medical file. I really wonder how many members of the Conservative government would sign today a release of all the information contained in their medical files. I don't think there would be many of them, because our medical files are part of our private being, part of what we expect to be treated with privacy, part of what we expect to be treated with confidentiality. Yet this government shows so little respect for workers that it's going to propose a law which says that workers have to shred all their privacy, have to give away all their confidentiality if they even so much as file a workers' compensation claim. This is nothing less than disgusting. This is nothing less than pathetic — nothing less.

You can count on the fact that when this comes up for debate, we'll be asking every Conservative member of this Legislature to sign a disclosure making his or her own private medical file available. If workers are going to be forced to submit to this kind of indignity, then I would suggest Conservative members of the government ought to submit to this kind of indignity.

Then there is the disclosure of the ultimate fallacy. The government says it wants to do this to save money, but you know what? The government intends to change the name of the Workers' Compensation Board, and do you know how much just the change of name will cost? The leaked cabinet document discloses that the change of name itself will blow \$1 million, will waste \$1 million on a name change. The government's whole line of reasoning here is totally fraudulent, and the fact that it's willing to spend \$1 million on a name change shows how absurd it is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order. Just a word of advice. Be careful with the type of words you choose. Just be careful, be extremely careful, and don't play with fire, please.

Mr Hampton: I have not accused the government of lying, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Just be careful.

Mr Hampton: The government's anti-worker agenda goes on when one examines employment standards. We've just seen the bad-boss bill. In fact, earlier this week, the Conservative government forced through this House the bad-boss bill on employment standards. Last spring the labour minister tried to pass the bad-boss bill off as housekeeping, merely saying, "These are housekeeping changes." But that didn't work. Once people saw what was included in the bill, people recognized that this legislation took away important rights from the most vulnerable workers in this province. When people saw what was in the bad-boss bill, they demanded public hearings, and the government was forced to give in. Then we heard from hundreds of individuals and groups in community after community across this province who said without hesitation that the bad-boss bill would be bad for workers and was a gift for some of the worst bosses in this province.

But that's not the end of it either. The minister has announced plans for a full-scale review of the entire Employment Standards Act. The government has a discussion paper that it's kept under wraps, that it's working on secretly. But we know what's in that discussion paper. Ontario workers will be watching to see what other rights are under attack.

A particular concern is the issue of overtime. We understand that the government wants to give employers the right to require up to 56 hours of overtime in a week; in other words, give employers the right to demand that workers work all those hours of overtime, regardless of whether workers have a family to look after, regardless of whether workers have children to look after, regardless of whether the worker's family is going to suffer. Whatever the bad bosses want, this government is prepared to give them, no matter what the detriment to workers, no matter what the detriment to workers' families, no matter what the detriment to the community. So workers are

going to watch for this and workers are going to fight this.

1540

This is wrong for Ontario. When the unemployment rate is 9% and going higher, when Ontario lost 35,000 jobs in the month of September, when retail sales are down despite the fact we have the lowest interest rates in many, many years in this country, when all of these things are happening, to force workers to work more and more hours of overtime is profoundly wrong. To force workers to neglect their families, to neglect their children, to neglect their home life in order that they can be forced to work more overtime, is not only economically wrong; it is morally wrong. But as I say, the government will bring this forward and it will face the fight of its life on these issues.

It doesn't end here, however. Equal pay is a guarantee of fair wages for women; it's a guarantee that employers will not pay women less for the same work or similar work men may be doing. Equal pay is equality. It is the principle that all workers should be paid equally and treated equally in the workplace, and now the government is even abandoning that.

Pay equity legislation was originally passed in 1987 with support from all three parties. Then the New Democratic government built upon the success of 1987 and in 1993 expanded equal pay coverage to about 420,000 more women by adding new equal pay tools like proportional value and proxy comparison.

The Harris Conservative government repealed the proxy method in its omnibus bill last year and eliminated the possibility of achieving equal pay for about 100,000 women in some of the lowest-paid jobs. In addition, thousands of women in the broader public sector who had won equal pay adjustments had these payments reduced by the Harris government. The Conservatives also eliminated funding for the Pay Equity Advocacy and Legal Services clinic, which helped women who are not in unions get what they deserve under the law: equal pay.

Since 1988, when the original Pay Equity Act took effect, there had been real progress. The wage gap between women and men earning yearly full-time salaries had decreased from 36% in 1988 to 24% last year. Sadly, that is now ending. There is still more progress to be made in equal pay, still much that needs to be done to ensure that workers, no matter their gender, are paid on an equal basis. But under the Harris Conservative government it's not going to happen. Instead, the Harris Conservative government is laying plans to gut the Pay Equity Act and abolish the Pay Equity Commission, which would halt all proactive enforcement. From now on, pay equity would only be enforced if a low-paid woman has the financial resources to file and pursue a complaint herself. In other words, the government is going to make it virtually impossible for women to achieve equal pay. The government is going to make it financially almost impossible for the lowest-paid women to achieve what they are entitled to by law and what they are entitled to by the principles of the United Nations.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): So it's equal pay for rich women only.

Mr Hampton: Equal pay for rich Conservative women only.

The government pays lip-service to the principles of pay equity, but it's doing everything it can to make sure no more women benefit from the law. They're doing everything they can to ensure the lowest-paid women in the province continue to be the lowest-paid:

Then there are things like cutbacks at the labour ministry, but I know that other members of our caucus want to talk about that, and there are things like the absolute failure of this government to consult and talk with workers across the province. Other members of my caucus want to talk about that.

I want to spend the last few minutes addressing the insult that is happening with respect to minimum wages. There are literally hundreds of thousands of workers in this province. The only way they get a pay raise is if the minimum wage is raised. That stands with the government. The Harris Conservative government is driving down the wages and living standards of those people: workers who receive the minimum wage.

Over the term of the NDP government we gradually raised the minimum wage to \$6.85 an hour. It's important to note that about 60% of all minimum wage earners are women. This includes mothers supporting their families at or below the poverty line. This summer even the Republican-dominated US Congress felt it had to show some decency by raising the minimum wage in the United States. They passed a bill that will raise the minimum wage to US\$5.15 an hour, and if you use a 35% exchange rate, it works out to C\$7 an hour. When you consider the exchange rate, it actually puts the minimum wage higher all across the United States than it is now in Ontario.

What a disgrace that this government aims to have the lowest minimum wage on the continent. What a disgrace to say that this government intends to go out there and say: "Ontario has the lowest minimum wage. We're proud of it."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Not true.

Mr Hampton: Some of the Conservative members say, "Untrue." The facts speak for themselves. Even a right-wing Congress dominated by the likes of Newt Gingrich passed a minimum wage increase that puts the minimum wage in the United States higher than in Ontario. The facts speak for themselves.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): You wouldn't know a fact if you fell over it, Howie. That's why you were bumped when you were in cabinet.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, obviously I've touched a nerve with the Conservative members, who clapped and cheered in here when the Minister of Labour tried to defend the use of scabs in the workplace.

It's useful just to reflect for a moment on the kind of economy we're going into in the 21st century. We're going into an economy where investments in training, in workers and in education for workers that will help make workers more productive are going to be more important than ever. What is this government doing? This government is sending a message to workers to workers: "We're not interested in investing in training. We're not interested in investing in you as workers. We're not interested in investing in safe and healthy workplaces. We're not

interested in investing in a Workers' Compensation Board that helps and benefits workers. We're not interested in raising the standard of living of workers. We're interested in having the lowest minimum wage in North America." It's a government that's interested in gutting the Workers' Compensation Board and destroying the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. That's the record of this government.

I have something very clear to say to the members of the government. Your agenda may enjoy some short-term popularity out there with those people who are looking for someone to blame, but in the longer term this government will go the same way that in the United States Ronald Reagan went, that George Bush went, that Robert Dole is going to go in about a month: down to the basement where they belong. People want to support a positive agenda which builds, not an agenda which cuts, not an agenda which attacks people, not an agenda which hurts people.

Mr Baird: What about Bob Rae?

Mr Turnbull: We're going to get a new history book.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): Tell us about Bob Rae in the basement.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. You'll have your turn. Just be patient.

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Mr Hampton: I know the government doesn't want to hear any of this, but throughout the day they will hear just how much they have attacked and hurt working people in this province and how wrong it is for all people in Ontario.

We celebrate workers, the contribution workers have made and the kind of vision workers want to build in this province.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd just like to advise the member in the gallery, you're most welcome here except that you have to follow and obey the procedures of the House, which indicate that you should not applaud or make any signs whatsoever.

Further debate? The member for Cochrane South, please. Otherwise you'll have to take your chair.

Mr Bisson: I'll take your chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, I ask you to apologize to the Chair.

Mr Bisson: I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and join this debate on the NDP resolution.

The goals of the Mike Harris government have always been very clear and straightforward. Our goal is to create jobs, encourage more investment in Ontario and bring hope and opportunity back to the province. For many years Ontario was the economic engine of Canada, a magnet for jobs, investment and opportunity, and for too long over the last 10 years and the two previous governments we've become a mismanaged debtor. We've become overgoverned, overregulated and overtaxed. We've lost our competitiveness, our ability to compete in the global market.

Competitiveness is very important. I read with great interest Bob Rae's book the other day, from which I'll read a quote on page 224 the members opposite might be interested in:

"Ontario was not seen as hungry enough for new business and new investment. Bureaucracy was too big and inefficient. We were lousy marketers. American states were much better at being aggressive and attracting new jobs. We were overtaxed and overregulated.... These are not things that New Democrats like to admit to ourselves, though they were increasingly obvious to most people."

Obviously Mr Rae learned a tremendous amount in government and he took it all with him when he left the House.

Mr Bisson: He's the guy that did the anti-scab legislation, so what's your point? You're the guys who are taking it away.

Mr Baird: The member opposite mentioned Bill 40. We believe that Bill 40 killed jobs. We were very clear the day Bill 40 passed that if we were given the privilege of forming a government in Ontario — the then leader of the third party, Mr Harris, stood in his place the day after it passed and said very clearly, "We will repeal Bill 40." He wanted to be so clear that a vote for him and a vote for one of his candidates in the next election would be a vote against Bill 40 that on the day after Bill 40 passed he put an ad in the *Globe and Mail* which said simply, "We will repeal Bill 40." It could not have been clearer.

From the day it was passed, it was going. To prove that this government is keeping its word, we introduced Bill 7 to restore balance and stability to labour relations in the province of Ontario. It is important to note —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): You turned back the laws 50 years. Bill 40 was good legislation. It helped Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane North, you're disturbing the House and you know what procedures can be followed. I just advise you.

Mr Baird: Bill 7 did one more important thing in repealing Bill 40: It introduced workplace democracy measures in the province. For the first time working men and women in this province were entitled to a secret ballot vote, normally within five working days, on whether they wanted or did not want to join a trade union. They had a secret ballot vote under Bill 7 on whether they chose or didn't choose to ratify a contract, which is absolutely extraordinary.

In discussions with representatives of a wide variety of groups across the province I found absolutely overwhelming support for secret ballot votes. One public opinion survey suggested that 92% of residents of Ontario supported the government in that position.

It's interesting to note, as the Minister of Labour did in question period today, that the number of strikes has actually declined in the province over the last 12 months. Unions continue to be certified and settlements continue to be made. Ninety-seven per cent of all collective agreements are settled without a strike or a lockout. There is an unprecedented number of collective agreements expiring this year: 3,400 agreements affecting 600,000 workers in the public sector and 200,000 private

sector workers. When these numbers are put in their proper perspective, we can see that the proportion of settlements ending without strikes is projected to be even better this year than last year under Bill 40.

But the one big difference is that we don't have a social contract. What was the social contract? I read with great interest some debates in Hansard. I remember the member for Nickel Belt, then the Treasurer, who said: "I want to say categorically that our government finds any prospect of overriding collective agreements painful and difficult, but our pain and our difficulty are nothing compared to what the alternatives would mean for the province. Sometimes it is necessary to give up something for the common good." That's what the member said.

When the members opposite talk about their relations with labour, we know what they did: They just overrode collective agreements. I look at the results from the vote on the social contract and I notice that every, single member of the NDP caucus who is in his place today voted in favour of overriding collective agreements. That's the way they saw labour relations. They would override Bill 40, and they're unapologetic. That's a fact. That's the truth. They believe in overriding collective agreements. When they were in government, that was their way of dealing with the fiscal mess we found ourselves in.

It's important to note that in the resolution the members opposite talk about health and safety. I'd like to remind the House that health and safety inspectors have not been cut under this government. The members opposite know about cutting health and safety inspectors, because they cut health and safety inspectors by 7% when they were in government. I looked through Hansard, through the committees, and there weren't public hearings on these health and safety inspectors. Not one single government member got up in this House, not once, and criticized his government for cutting health and safety inspectors. While this Minister of Labour maintains the current level of health and safety inspectors, the members opposite all voted for budgets, each and every single year they were in government, to cut health and safety inspectors. That's their view about health and safety.

I think it's important to note with respect to Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act, which received final approval on Monday, that it is not cutting minimum standards. The minimum wage is not affected; the minimum wage remains exactly the same. The hours of work remain exactly the same after Bill 49 has been passed. Severance packages are not going to change —

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Does the member have to be truthful when giving a speech?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask you to withdraw that remark.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw. I just asked the question.

The Deputy Speaker: I just advise you, member for Cochrane South, be careful.

Mr Baird: As I was saying, the severance arrangements under the Employment Standards Act remain unchanged. Vacation pay remains unchanged. The one standard that did change, with respect to pregnancy leave, was supported by virtually every witness the committee heard, where this government clarified provisions for working women in the province.

I believe there's no justice in \$10-billion deficits. There is no social justice in \$10-billion, \$11-billion, \$11.3-billion deficits. There's no social justice in \$11-billion unfunded liabilities either. These are the legacies of both parties opposite from their time in government, which is most interesting.

With respect to pay equity, we're committed to the principles of pay equity, and our response will be forthcoming very shortly. The Pay Equity Act, passed by a previous Parliament, states that every seven years after its enactment, the government of the day would be required to review the legislation by statute. We cancelled the \$1-million process authorized by the previous government and replaced it with a much more cost-effective and efficient review, totalling some \$52,000.

Jean Read, the reviewer of the act, is a widely respected authority on employment and labour law and a 27-year veteran of the Ontario public service. Read consulted with over 150 stakeholders, including organized labour, business, women's groups, pay equity advocates, human resource professionals and many others.

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The priorities for the government on the issue of pay equity include finding ways to continue pay equity in an efficient, affordable and sustainable manner — "sustainable" is an important word there — developing a forward-looking and cost-effective administrative framework, and finding ways to make the act more flexible and responsive to the needs of the modern workplace, because the government remains committed to the principles of pay equity. Our response to the Jean Read report will be balanced and will reflect that commitment, which is very important to know.

The members opposite, in their resolution, spoke about full and fair workers' compensation. We believe there's a need for full and fair funding of workers' compensation, but we believe an \$11-billion-plus unfunded liability is absolutely —

Interjections.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have now had six interjections in less than two minutes from the New Democratic Party members, and interjections are out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: As you know, one of the main qualities of a Speaker is patience, and I think I've advised the members often enough. The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: That, I believe, is the best guarantee that Ontario's injured workers and their families will continue to have full and fair compensation that they'll be able to depend on and count on.

The members opposite also during question period today —

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): You're going to take \$15 million away from injured workers.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, you're a mature politician. I think you will understand what the procedures are. I would ask you just to refrain from heckling and to wait for the opportunity to voice your opinion. Please do so.

Mr Christopherson: He's being provocative.

The Deputy Speaker: Please.

Mr Baird: I'm telling the truth, Mr Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: You're not.

The Deputy Speaker: I won't play any games. I don't play games, honestly. Please, withdraw this. Please withdraw.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw that, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The leader of the third party mentioned in his remarks the future of the occupational health clinics for the working people in the province of Ontario. Just today the Minister of Labour put out a press release, "Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers To Continue." We're seeking a system that's more efficient, more effective and more accountable.

I'll give a quote from that document. "Workplace health and safety will improve when the ministry and its partners share a common vision and a coordinated strategy — to help employers and employees assume greater responsibility for preventing and eliminating hazards in the workplace." Those type of outrageous scare tactics from some members should be put in their proper context with the facts. The clinics will stay open. Health and safety is a top priority for this government and there's no hidden agenda or reason to fear one. We're doing what we promised to do.

Regarding the comments in the motion with respect to pushing legislation through, on Bill 15, the first phase of WCB reform, I believe the standing committee on resources development heard every individual who requested to appear. We completed three weeks of hearings on Bill 49 over the summer months. With respect to Bill 7, I think there was a very clear offer made for public hearings, and regrettably we were not able to get unanimous consent to even form the committees so we could have public hearings, which was unfortunate, because we in the government caucus were preparing on a daily basis for those public hearings and were all prepared to undertake them. But regrettably the third party denied us that important opportunity. That's important to get on the record.

With respect to the content of the resolution, which I find most outrageous, "Whereas the Mike Harris government has laid off hundreds of workers at the Ministry of Labour" — hundreds of workers — I look at the record of the members opposite between 1991 and 1995, when the member for Nickel Belt, who is now with us, presented budgets where the Ministry of Labour's budget was cut by some \$63 million.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Be gentle.

Mr Baird: My friend says, "Be gentle." I know it was a tough time to be in government and he survived it quite well. They laid off 351 employees and then they have the audacity to criticize members on this side of the House for making some very difficult decisions when they themselves did it. Was there one single question in question period when these people were laid off? Was there one single question in this House? Was there one hour of public hearings? The answer was no, no, no and no.

The members opposite voted to cut health and safety inspectors in the province of Ontario by 7%. Again, no public hearings, no opposition by any government member in the House. That is, in my mind, given the content of this motion, absolutely shameful.

With respect to minimum wage, which was brought up by the leader of the third party, in 1996 our minimum wage in the province of Ontario is among the highest in Canada, indeed one of the highest in all of North America. I indicate to the members opposite, why don't they stand up and tell us what they think the minimum wage should be?

There was a woman who came before our committee in the city of London. I think her name was Susan Smith. She suggested that the minimum wage should be \$19.50, a \$20-an-hour minimum wage — an absolute silence from both opposition parties. They did not, and could not in public hearings, suggest that they believe that would be too excessive. Well, those of us on the government side reject a \$20-an-hour minimum wage. It would kill jobs, and it would kill our competitiveness.

With respect to the standard of living of working families, another component of the member opposite's resolution, working people in this province are going to get a 30% tax cut, and that's important to note. I read with great interest the debate on Bill 48, the social contract, in 1993, where the then Treasurer said: "To raise taxes even more than we did — I think we pushed the envelope as far as we could on tax increases."

Those of us on this side of the aisle totally agree with the member for Nickel Belt when he made that comment. That's why he moved over here. Even more than agreeing with our friend the member for Nickel Belt, we believed that the people of Ontario were overtaxed and we wanted to roll back those tax increases, and we did, which will create jobs, as we've already seen.

I look at the employment numbers in my own community. The community of Ottawa-Carleton was really hurting with unemployment, and we still have a long way to go. But unemployment in Ottawa-Carleton, my home community, has fallen from over 10% to some 7.4%. Last month in Ottawa-Carleton we saw the creation of 6,000 net new jobs. That's after the federal government announced it was going to be cutting an additional 10,000 public servants, up to 55,000 now. We've created, in the Ottawa-Carleton economy, some 36,000 net new jobs, and we're seeing some good signs on the horizon that the job creation numbers are picking up and that this government is going in the right direction.

What we're seeing with this government is a balanced approach, the approach that worked well in this province for many, many years when we were the economic engine of Canada, when we led the country in job creation, led the nation in economic growth. The approach we've laid out in the last 18 months in government was exactly the approach we put forward more than a year before the election campaign. No government, no political party, to my knowledge, has ever been more clear on its direction for the economy. We're doing what we said we would do: restoring some integrity to promises made by politicians. The approach of this government is to create jobs and to encourage hope and oppor-

tunity for a brighter future for all people in the province of Ontario.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to the resolution of the third party. One of the nice things about having opposition days is that it gives each of us a chance to put forward our opinions, not necessarily restricted to a certain piece of legislation and whether we agree with that piece of legislation or not. It sometimes gives us an opportunity to speak to an issue in the way we feel about the issue, in that parties don't always have to take specific positions when it comes to motions that are presented before the House. That's why today I welcome the opportunity to speak to this motion and to some of the things that may have prompted the motion to be put forward by the third party.

I want to say at the outset that each of us, no matter which side of the House we sit on, has, as friends and relatives, workers. They may be unionized or they may be non-unionized. This province is made up of workers, for the most part. For example, my father spent many years, until he died at unfortunately too young an age — but then I've often said that if I live to be 100, that will still be too young. But my father, all his working life, worked with his hands. He was a mechanic. He worked at Greyhound. I understood as I grew up and sat around the table what it meant to go out and make a living.

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We didn't have a lot of money, but my parents did their best so that we could enjoy life. My mother worked in the tobacco factory in Leamington when I was younger and then, for a number of years, was able to work in the home. Some days I'm sure I made that more difficult than it would have been to work in the tobacco factory. But then, after my father died, she later worked at the hospital in the cafeteria.

I have a brother-in-law who works for the board of education in Essex county, who is in the custodial part of that. We all have friends who are in the workforce or some who may be in managerial positions.

As well, for 10 years, a little less, when I was with a small business that had branches in Leamington and Wheatley and Chatham, the Chatham yard of our lumber company had a local of the Teamsters union. I can say to you that some of the most interesting, some of the most educational, some of the most informative and, yes, some of the most fun I had, having been secretary-treasurer of the company, was to negotiate with the Teamsters union at our Chatham yard.

I might say that in the years that I bargained with them — in fact, all the years of the company until it was sold — we didn't have a workplace disruption. When all was said and done, we sat down at a table and we worked out our differences. If there was any misunderstanding as to what the contract might mean, as time went on — I guess there may have been grievances from time to time; there were so few I really can't recall — the objective was to work together, to have a workplace where management and labour could get along.

I don't think progress in the province stopped because of labour laws. The member for Nepean made reference

to how bad it was over the last 10 years. Although I certainly was paying more attention to local conditions at the time, I recall that the period leading up to 1990 was pretty good in the province. It happened to be that it was for a long time under a Conservative government, for a short time under a minority government that had to learn to get along with each other, and then for a short period of time under a Liberal government.

Came the 1990s, we hit tough, tough economic times. I will not make any excuses for the third party, because I'm sure they can speak about what happened for themselves. But I will say that the early 1990s were damned tough times in this province, they were damned tough times in North America and in fact worldwide. I use that term, knowing full well that I wanted to add emphasis to how difficult it was to do business anywhere in North America and in fact in the world.

I don't think it was the introduction of labour laws that stopped progress in Ontario — quite the contrary. Ontario grew to be the economic engine of this country over a period of years, and a number of things contributed to that: the economy itself, the ability of labour and management to work together, the fact that workers had safer workplaces to work in, the fact that there was less lost time, which is a burden on the economy.

To simply say that labour law stopped the engine — I don't think that's the case. Labour harmony, I think, is an essential component in a healthy and prosperous economy. One complements the other. For 50 years, as was mentioned by the leader of the third party, governments of all stripes have been adopting laws that improve the lives of people and encourage a labour climate that enhances investment opportunities. That's been the key to the development of the province of Ontario over the years. I hope that in these instances, in some legislation that was just passed this week and in other legislation that's to come, the government isn't being pound foolish and penny wise, because you have to make an investment in the people in this province if we're going to continue to be progressive and continue to grow.

I don't think the government pictures labour unrest as being beneficial. No matter what happens this weekend with the expressions that are going to be shown in the city of Toronto, whether you're for it or whether you're against it, whether you're inconvenienced by it or whether you don't care, it's not going to do the province any good. At the end of the day, if people are not happy with the expression of dislike of the government, the government may say, "We won because a lot of people were upset that they were inconvenienced."

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It would appear that we don't have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Mr Speaker, a quorum is now present.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Essex South.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Speaker. I should be a bit like the member for Welland-Thorold when he's speaking

at length at committee and say, "Gee, you interrupted my thought. Now I'm going to have to go back 15 minutes," but I won't do that.

There may be those who show their concern this weekend in demonstrations. They may also say they've won their point. But the problem is that because we have to do this, because we have to show our concern to the government, because it is using a bulldozer in many of the areas in which they are pushing their legislation and their mantra through, we don't look good to the rest of the country and we won't look good to the rest of North America.

I say again that what we really need is good harmony between labour and management. What does that lead to? I suspect that many of the laws that have been put in place over the years for worker protection have been put there not because perhaps the majority of employers are the bad guys but because some are. We don't have speed limits in place and we don't ticket people on the highway because everybody speeds, although when I drive from Leamington to Toronto these days I think everybody does, but we put them there so that the laws won't be abused, so that people won't be hurt. That's the way labour laws as they are have been developed over the years. I dislike seeing that kind of legislation that takes away from that kind of labour-management harmony, that makes our workforce more apprehensive and concerned, that doesn't protect our workforce if they happen to work for an employer who has unsafe working conditions. That's the kind of thing I don't think we should go backward on.

1620

I said at the outset that the nice thing about debating these resolutions is that we each hear what others are thinking and it gets our thoughts going. The member for Nepean, I think it was, mentioned tax cuts. That certainly has its effect, whether you agree that it will be the effect the government wants or not, on the economy — a beneficial economy or whether it's going to hurt some other people. When we mention the tax cut, something that won't help this government is the fact that, by its own numbers, at the end of a four- or five-year period our debt will have risen from \$100 billion a year to \$120 billion a year.

Interjection: A year?

Mr Crozier: Excuse me, from \$100 billion to \$120 billion in total. Thank you very much.

We should remind ourselves that each of the parties in this place has had some part in building that debt. I don't think that debt in itself is going to help this province because the cost of carrying the debt is going to be higher. I reminded myself when he brought that up that yes, in the long period of time that the Conservative government was in power, it accumulated a debt of some \$35 billion; in the next five years, from 1985 to 1990, the government of the party that I am a part of now increased the debt by \$5 billion; and, we're told, over the next four or five years this government will increase it by another \$20 billion. Of the \$120-billion total debt that we will have, this government will be responsible for about \$55 billion. The point is that the last \$20 billion they will

have added on to it will all be borrowed money. That won't help the economy.

The government says in this legislation that it wants to improve the prospect for jobs. In the House today it was mentioned in several of the questions what the job picture is in the Ontario. Everything we do is to make Ontario a better place to live, to improve the workplace, to improve the probability, the possibility, the outlook for jobs in this province.

This government has promised us 180,000 jobs. Our finance critic, as late as yesterday, pointed out to all of us that after 15 months in office we only have 100,000 jobs. I would have hoped, as everyone would have hoped, that there would have been this other 80,000 jobs that we're missing. Over the last 15 months 150,000 people have entered the workforce, but we've only provided somewhere in the neighbourhood of, I think it was said, 99,000 or 100,000 jobs. So where are those people, those other 56,000 or 57,000 people, going to find work? Will they want to work in a work environment that doesn't treat workers fairly? No, I don't think they'll want to work in that kind of environment.

All of this is tied into the economy, it's all tied into the need for jobs, but in doing so, we have to have a workforce and management or business that work in harmony.

That brings me to comment on one point — I'll limit it to one point because I know there are others in my caucus who want to speak — and that's pay equity. I can't for the life of me understand why anyone in this province should not receive equal pay for equal work. It doesn't matter your gender; it should only matter what you do, what's a fair wage to be paid for it and, are you paid fairly compared to those people who work with you? I'm sad about the fact that it's going to be more difficult for people to be paid fairly, for pay equity. I'm sad about that. I think we were partway to it; we don't have everybody there yet. But now, to simply say, "Well, if you're not paid fairly it's okay unless you complain" — a person shouldn't have to complain about it, because they're concerned about their job to begin with.

So I'm saddened that pay equity has suffered under this legislation that's recently passed and some that's proposed. I only hope that if it's found to be hurtful, which we think it will be, we can rethink it and we can help maintain it in those places where we have it and bring back harmony, protection, equal pay, have a workforce that we all enjoy and that we want to work in, because in the end it will benefit the province of Ontario.

Mr Christopherson: I want to begin my remarks by — and I know the camera can't point to it — but I want to ensure the record shows that I'm very proud to say that the first ever NDP labour minister is here with us today, Bob Mackenzie. I know all those who really care about workers will want to pay a certain amount of honour to what he's done.

I think it's interesting to note that, while the parliamentary assistant had great fun being on his feet trying to compare their agenda that affects workers and our agenda, the former NDP labour minister is up there with the workers, up there with the strikers, up there with the injured workers. That's for a good reason: because he

brought in legislation that helped workers. Where's your minister?

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Listen to the heckles from the back benches. There's their minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Please show the same respect to them as they showed to you. Please.

Mr Christopherson: I think it's interesting to note that the current Minister of Labour is sitting down here, nice and safe in her legislative seat. I would ask her, You take a walk up there and greet those workers, Minister. I'd like to see how they welcome you, because I see how they welcome the former NDP minister, Bob Mackenzie. What about you? Hell, I can remember when your parliamentary assistant went down to Windsor to speak to a building trades council because you were too chicken to go. He had to come in with armed guards. They booed him.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I find this aggressive. I find this very aggressive, and it's not conducive to a good debate.

Mr Christopherson: Well, Speaker, then I'm going to have to run the risk of incurring the wrath of the Speaker, because I feel very aggressive in terms of what this government is doing to working people, and that's why we brought this resolution here today. We're trying to focus on the fact that this government is dismantling all the things that workers have built up over decades of struggle and fight, sometimes getting hurt and sometimes dying, to give us the labour rights that we've been so very proud of. That's why we take special mention of the fact the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre is opening up in Hamilton, so that there's a formal place to recognize the role of labour and the contribution they've made and the struggle they've gone through. I feel very passionate and very aggressive in defending those rights and I'll continue to do that as long as I'm privileged enough to sit in this chamber.

It was in 1946 that in my home town of Hamilton the United Steelworkers, Local 1005, took on the historic struggle against Stelco that had such major implications for establishing a free and democratic labour movement in this province and in this country. And then the auto workers in Windsor, striking against the Ford workers — my home union, the auto workers, proudly took on that fight and they established another important foundation that built this labour movement. That's another reason why we brought in this resolution, because as much as you're going to dismantle what workers have fought for, we're not going to let you forget that there's a proud heritage of workers and the labour movement being an important partner in building this society, in building this economy the Tories like to brag about so much. The average working person in this province and in generations to come need to know that contribution. We can never, ever let any generation forget the contribution they've made, because if we do, it allows governments like this to get away with what they're doing. Unless and until they manage to get re-elected on this agenda, they haven't gotten away with it.

1630

That's another reason we've brought this out. We want to expose this government for what it is: an anti-worker

government that has a hard right-wing agenda that serves the rich and wealthy in this province and says to everyone else who is not in that category, "Tough luck." That's why there are Metro Days of Action; that's why on Friday and Saturday, there will be hundreds of thousands of working people. There will be teachers and there will be environmentalists and there will be activists for housing and the rights for women and minorities and a whole lot of people who make up our community who have all been attacked by this government.

That's why that day is happening and, quite frankly, that is why there will continue to be different kinds of action across the term of this government, because you are not going to get away with what you're doing. The minister wants to stand up and say, "Oh, no, we didn't take away any rights in the bad-boss Bill 49" — I showed today that she has — and the parliamentary assistant stands up and says the NDP was not a good labour government that cared about workers. You can try and hand that BS off to the general public, but the fact of the matter is that there's nobody out there who truly believes that this is a government that cares a whit about working people.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not accept that language. Please withdraw.

Mr Christopherson: Which, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: I don't have to repeat it. You know too well what you've said.

Mr Christopherson: If it allows me to continue, I withdraw my remarks that you found unparliamentary, that were unparliamentary — whatever. Please.

The reason there are people here from the picket line at S.A. Armstrong is because this government's bill made scabs legal again in the province of Ontario when it was Bob Mackenzie and the NDP government that finally eradicated that blight from our society. The fact that somebody could go in — and what is such a shame is that quite often they're not anti-worker or anti-union-type workers; they're usually very desperate people who don't have an awful lot of alternatives. When I was there and I saw some of the people who were crossing that line, I felt sorry for them as well as the strikers, because in large part they didn't really even know. Many of them were new Canadians who didn't even understand the principles that were being violated when they crossed that line. That didn't happen a year ago. Just a year ago, that kind of insult to the rights of workers did not happen. Thanks to this government, we now see that again.

I visited another picket line at Lofthouse Brass. They're on, I believe, their second or third day of a strike. The company was intending to bring scabs across the line. They talk about the balance of power. Well, allowing scabs to cross picket lines tips the balance of power in such an unfair way that it's not surprising they can point to a lower number of strikes, although we would argue the number of hours involved is much higher: It's tipped the balance to the point where it truly has to be a desperate situation before workers are prepared to go out on strike, recognizing that they've never done it lightly. That's what you did.

The parliamentary assistant talks about the fact that this government told everybody they were going to repeal

Bill 40, they were going to take it away. What they did not tell anybody was that they were going to take away the right of public sector workers to have their collective agreement intact when that work is privatized. It's nowhere in the campaign literature, they didn't talk about it in the campaign and they didn't have any public hearings. They just took away that right, and those 12,000 workers who are going to lose decent-paying jobs, those professional people providing a service to the people of Ontario, are going to see their jobs privatized, are going to lose the rights they have under a collective agreement — all their seniority rights gone, all their vacation entitlement gone, all their pension entitlement gone, all of that gone because this government rammed through a piece of legislation in less than one month. Yet they have the audacity to stand there and talk about how they consulted with all kinds of people and have talked to all kinds of people. They did not do that.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): What about Bill 48?

Mr Christopherson: One of the members hollers out, "What about Bill 49?" Let's talk about Bill 49.

Mr Tilson: I said Bill 48.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, take your seat.

Mr Christopherson: Bill 49 is a bill that we had to force the government to hold public hearings on because they didn't care enough about democracy or workers to give them a say. We had to lead that fight here in this Legislature, backed up by the labour movement, and that's why we had hearings on Bill 49.

That bad-boss bill, by the way, is going to make it that much worse for vulnerable workers in this province because they've taken away rights that workers have, they're going to slash the number of enforcement officers who are out there, and that sends a message to those bad bosses: "Not only continue, folks, but go for broke. Really go after those workers, you can really exploit them now." We not only have no laws protecting people, what few laws are left can't be enforced because there are no enforcement officers. That's what that bill was all about.

WCB: Is there anything more disgraceful than a government that runs on a platform and says, "Nothing we will do will hurt disabled people," and yet somehow disabled workers don't count? They're fair game, you can go after them, and you're going after them to the tune of \$15 billion that you're going to take away from the benefits injured workers are entitled to. At the same time, you're giving back \$6 billion to the employers that have a responsibility to fund it. This is not taxpayer money. There's not one cent of taxpayer money that goes into WCB. It is funded by employers because workers don't have the right to sue their boss if they're hurt on the job. That was the exchange.

While this government talks about the unfunded liability being in a huge crisis, the reality is that they're using that as an excuse to give \$6 billion back to employers, which is going to drive up the unfunded liability to \$18 billion. But because that's not politically tenable, you need to bring that back down, and how are you going to do it? You're going to reach right into the

pockets of disabled workers and take out \$15 billion. That's how you're going to do it. That is shameful, that is disgusting.

The Occupational Disease Panel has played a critical role in this province in ensuring that the scientific and medical evidence needed to link workplace diseases and illness is supported. They provide that arm's length, objective, scientific medical analysis to prove those things. If they aren't provable, it also very clearly makes that case, but more importantly for workers, where it is the case, it proves the point. This government's killing that panel. I've read into the Hansard record here outrage and shock and surprise from around the world from occupational health and safety experts who know the contribution that panel has made to helping injured workers.

But it fits. It's all part of the scenario. That's why the resolution is here. We're trying to point out that this is not just opposition rhetoric. As much as the government backbench members may like to say that's the case, it isn't. There's a track record. You've only been here 16 months and there's a track record of your ongoing attack on workers' rights.

The Workplace Health and Safety Agency, where workers had a 50% say in the training of ensuring that workers weren't injured and didn't acquire illnesses and disease on the job, is dead. Gone already. This government has already eliminated that agency.

The Workers' Health and Safety Centre is an important element in ensuring that workers are trained by workers, because that's who they trust, that's who they'll listen to. That budget has been severely slashed. Workers there have been laid off and the centre's very existence is now on the line.

The occupational health clinics for Ontario workers: The government released a media release today that talks about the fact that they're staying in place and that the four clinics are going to survive, for the time being at least. That never should have been on the line. If you really cared about health and safety, the minister's been in office long enough she should have answered the first time we asked her in the House: "Of course I won't kill those clinics. Of course not, I have no intention. That would be a ridiculous idea. I would never do that."

But that's not what happened. This minister left those clinics dangling for months and the labour movement mounted what proved to be obviously a very effective campaign to preserve those clinics, and the government backed down in the face of those lobbying efforts. But the labour movement shouldn't have to fight to preserve what they've already fought for and gained. The labour movement should be working to make things better for workers, to prevent workers from being injured. That's not possible with this government. There's a major campaign going on — I see one of the backbenchers shaking his head. I know he's shaking his head; I can hear it.

1640

The Ontario Federation of Labour has mounted a campaign to respond to the WCB attacks and they're calling it "It's Your Life: Don't Leave Work Without It." I believe we'll be seeing a lot of these tags and buttons

and posters all across this province as the labour movement gears up to try to protect the rights that workers already have; never mind gains, just protect what's already in place.

That's the shame and the disgusting aspect of this agenda. It puts workers on the defensive. It puts workers out there fighting just to preserve what's already in place. And your corporate friends? Oh, they're having a wonderful time. They're just so pleased. They're getting cuts in their WCB premiums and some of them are getting all the tax cuts.

I've said every time I get a chance up here to anybody watching this at home: How much money are you getting back in the tax cut? Is it worth the rights you've lost in the workplace and the attack on WCB? Is it worth the loss in our health care system and the closure of hospitals? Is it worth the elimination of a highly respected education system? Is it really worth the few bucks that you're getting? I think you're going to see — and that's why the Metro Days of Action are going to be so effective — that people are beginning to realize no. "As much as I liked the clarion call of tax cuts, when I look at what it means to me and my family and my neighbours and my community, I say no, it's not worth it."

That is happening in every community that those protests have been in, and we're only 16 months into this government's term, unfortunately. Wait until the full impact of all these cuts, with \$3 billion more to be announced next month: \$3 billion more, and we haven't even felt the effect of the first \$5 billion, recognizing that \$5 billion to \$6 billion of this money is going to the very wealthy through the tax cut. That's who is winning in this game. You're creating a province of haves and have-nots, and the most vulnerable members of our society, in particular the working women and men, are the real losers. They are the ones who are losing in this government's agenda.

My leader just finished speaking about the minimum wage, and I heard one of the Tory backbenchers over here in the rump section heckling, "Yeah, but we cut their taxes."

"You're cutting my taxes, you're not giving me a decent wage to live on, you're cutting my health care system, you're cutting the education system I need for my kids, but I'm supposed to feel happy because somebody who makes \$250,000 a year is going to receive thousands and thousands of dollars back in taxes while I get a couple of bucks a week." Somehow they're supposed to be satisfied.

When we talk about minimum wage, the parliamentary assistant talked about the fact that he was upset about it, that our minimum wage used to be among the highest in Canada, and oh my dear God, it was among the highest in the world. Well, from where we sit, you ought to be proud of that. That's the idea, to share the wealth and make sure everybody gains, not to hold everybody down in this massive race to the bottom and compete with Third World entities, which is this government's agenda.

That's the game with you. That's the idea. Drive wages down; drive the standard of living down; have people so scared and desperate and recognizing that scabs can take their jobs if they go on strike that they'll take whatever

is thrown at them; water down the Employment Standards Act; cut the number of enforcement officers that are in place; open up the Occupational Health and Safety Act; water down WCB; give a gift back of \$6 billion to the employers who fund workers' comp. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to add all that up and see there is clearly a defined agenda that says, "Workers in this province are the target and this government is going to go after them relentlessly."

I'm here to say to you that as long as the NDP is here, we'll fight you tooth and nail and do everything we can to stop this awful attack on working people, and we'll do what we can to put progressive labour legislation back on the agenda in the province of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure to participate in the debate today on the issues surrounding labour. I've listened with great interest to the member for Hamilton Centre and his usual loud, rather rhetorical and, as you said, Mr Speaker, aggressive tone. I'm not sure if he's truly representative of the leadership in the labour movement today, but I think we can have a debate. That means both people have to listen and be fair and reasonable. That's the balance you're missing, I must comment.

I think the best solution to a social program is a job. This government was elected on the basis of creating a climate for investment and a climate for jobs. I really think the last five years proved in themselves that indeed the central problem was their particular approach to the labour relations arena. I want to make sure they realize the full impact of Bill 48. You were very quick to respond and recognize then minister Mackenzie, who, I might point out for you, supported the social contract; in fact, he was one of the chief heralds of it. If you want to know his leader's true opinion, Mr Bob Rae's book indicates his reflections. He talks of the union leadership, if I may quote:

"I felt then, and I feel today, that the women and men in the public service in Ontario were poorly served by their leaders, who were caught in a time warp and rhetorical swamp that they were unable to leave. They were aided and abetted by the usual gang of would-be proletarians and anarchists."

I suspect a very profound man — I have a lot of respect for Mr Rae and his comments. I think he had time to reflect on that dismal error, and now you're still championing it and believe that your approach was right. What was wrong was that there was no balance; you had gone too far. What we're restoring today, and in this whole agenda, is a fairness and a balance. Mr Johnson, our minister, when he was in the debates with the Ontario public service employees, tried to reach a fair and reasonable agreement, and I think that typifies the balance of most of the debates.

I just want to comment briefly on Mr Bob White's comments in Mr Rae's book when he suggested that one of the province's solutions at that time to bail out of its \$100-billion debt and the \$50 billion was to declare bankruptcy. That's a statement by the leadership of the day, and that person is still in the leadership position, usurping the real commitment to the people of Ontario and indeed Canada by just declaring bankruptcy. That's totally unacceptable. I think the reality today is something

quite different and I believe the union leadership has a serious challenge. They should look around them.

I'm going to comment on an article in the Toronto Star which isn't particularly favourable to our position, but in fact it makes a very good point. The point was most thoroughly expounded by labour economist John O'Grady, and he explained in that article in the Star of September 20, 1996, that the world of work is changing and that the union leadership has to get out of the quagmire of the past. The industrialized workplace is shrinking. The workplace of the future is not the workplace of the past. The strategies and techniques to support the most vulnerable workers are indeed the fundamental mission, I might add, of our minister, Minister Witmer.

I'm going to read to you from the first time a ministry has actually put together a business plan, an approach by a ministry to outline both its vision and purpose and core business. I'm just going to read it directly because it's so thoroughly developed and says it more succinctly than I could put in my own words.

"At the Ministry of Labour, we are rededicating ourselves to our traditional mission of advancing safe, fair and harmonious workplaces, but we are approaching this mission in a way that is refreshing. Our role will be to set and communicate and enforce workplace standards while encouraging greater self-reliance among the workplace parties, both the employee and the employer."

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: If you can't get through that, Mrs Boyd from London, I recommend that you try to rethink the rhetoric of the past. It doesn't work.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): That is the rhetoric of Reform.

Mr O'Toole: This isn't Reform; this is thoughtful, responsive partnership.

Mrs Boyd: It's Reform.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London Centre.

Mr O'Toole: "The ministry should concentrate more of its resources on workplaces that need the most help, moving forward and focusing our resources of self-reliance and also helping the most vulnerable. The changes set out in our business plan will have a positive result in each of the three core areas of the ministry."

1650

Occupational health and safety: That's a primary focus, putting it together with workers' comp to be proactive in prevention, as opposed to just delivering cheques to those injured employees.

Supporting employer rights and responsibilities in labour relations: Again, the theme there is balance. I think if you're looking through —

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: I participated in the Bill 49 hearings. Much of what Mr Christopherson is saying about Bill 49 is completely misleading. For those people watching, what we're doing —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. You know this is not a term or the type of language which is acceptable to the House. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I withdraw.

I would like the people viewing today to understand that the Employment Standards Act is really an act that

is the floor of protection for working people, of which I'm one. In my riding of Durham East, many of the people I represent are indeed working people, of which I am one. Employment standards deals with termination notices, termination pay, public holidays, hours of work, overtime pay, parental leave — all of those I've mentioned have been untouched, but parental leave was improved — Sunday work, unpaid wages, severance pay, vacation pay, minimum wage, pregnancy leave — pregnancy leave was improved and enhanced as well — domestic workers and home workers. None of this has been touched. What the changes are — I can go over them very briefly for those watching.

Bill 49 was, again, trying to work in a reasonable balance. What it really did was examine some of the actual vulnerabilities or those people who were the most vulnerable, to focus our limited resources — everyone knows that the province was overspent, and now we're trying to do the best we can with what we have. Most claims are under \$4,000; that's two thirds of all the claims. In fact, only about 4% were over \$10,000, so we're limiting the claims to \$10,000 maximum, focusing our resources where they're most needed.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): It's not your money. They have a right to it —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, the member for Sudbury East, take your seat. Show the same respect as they showed to you, that's all. It's as simple as that.

Mr Len Wood: But Speaker, He's being too aggressive in his comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Cochrane North, would you like to be absent from the House?

Mr O'Toole: I'll try to be fair and reasonable.

Mr Baird: You always are.

Mr O'Toole: I always thought so.

Major administrative changes include shortening the time in which an employee may file a claim to six months. It's six months to allow the claim. That's to put us in harmony with the rest of Canada. In other provinces, this is not new. This is a standard that's pretty much the norm throughout the rest of Canada.

It also disallows parallel court procedures, where a person could take it both through the legal aspect and through the Ministry of Labour. We're allowing them to choose, and there's a 45-day appeal period for them to choose one or the other, saving the administrative cost within the ministry and for the employer, who may indeed be willing to settle the case. I think many of the cases are settled right in the workplace.

This government really wants to deal with the bad bosses, as the previous speaker said. We're not supportive of bad bosses. The person who has worked is entitled to their pay, and we support that. The ministry is trying to support that by focusing our resources on the most vulnerable. Those places where there's union representation, most of the people I speak to are quite willing to address the workplace issues themselves —

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, the union workshop is very much in favour of supporting their own workplace autonomy.

The bill will allow the contracting out of collections. Today, you might understand that two thirds of those

judgements or orders are not collected, so two thirds of the people who are entitled or have earned these wages are not getting them. Zero. They're not getting anything. What we're saying is that we're going to put collections in, and there will be a performance aspect to it. The collection agency will not get paid unless the person gets paid.

Mrs Boyd: Where do they get paid from?

Mr O'Toole: They will get paid from the employer, the dead-beat employers. That, to me, is a step forward.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Again I have to stress I'm afraid you're not listening for a new approach. This government is committed to creating the opportunity and hope for the people and jobs. Jobs is what the economy's all about. This whole argument, in my view, Bill 49 — there were a number of supporters, but from my riding. I would have to suggest that the chamber of commerce from Clarington and Oshawa area made a comment: "The government of the day is to be applauded for its businesslike approach to legislation reform in the entire area of labour. We are in the business of creating work and investing in the future in our communities."

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Who said that?

Mr O'Toole: This was the chamber of commerce for Oshawa-Clarington. I would like you to respect this. They represent small business and it's surprising to me that people today in Small Business Week don't recognize the important contribution of the chambers of commerce, those people investing their own money in small business. They're not asking for some handout. It really embarrasses me to think that there would be people on the other side who would not stand up and champion the small business of our communities.

Certainly the chamber of commerce — they're criticizing them all the time. Let me just give you a few facts here. If you were to understand the makeup of the workforce, the total private sector employment in Ontario is about 4,200,000; 43% of them are small business. These are people employing fewer than 100 people. Seventy-eight percent of all Ontario's employers are small business. They are employing fewer than five people. In fact, these people have their homes invested to create jobs and opportunity for other people in Ontario.

What the previous Bill 40 was all about — we were elected on that. That was one of the things that defeated you. You just don't get it; you really don't get it. Why they defeated you is most of the new jobs of the future aren't the large corporate entities who — by the way, this is your problem, and I could quote to you, you can't organize the small workplaces because the individual employees who have the motivation, work ethics and incentive are well rewarded by those employers for the most part, 95% to 98%. They're quite complete to work as a full part of the workforce. It's not a division of labour and management; it's the working team. That's the approach today, teamwork.

Every good employer will tell you their strength is people. Look at Dofasco. I always remark at how they compete head on with Stelco with no union. What they really say is, "Our product is steel, our strength is

people." But small business take and internalize that today. They spend more on training and developing and making sure that people are focused on quality and productivity so they can be competitive and maintain their jobs.

Small business is the real issue that I want to complete my comments on if I could today. This government was elected to deal with debt and deficit; we're doing it. We were elected to reduce income tax; we're doing it. We were elected to reduce the employer health tax; we're doing it. We were elected to repeal Bill 40; we've done it. Labour reform — workers' compensation was seen to be a barrier to growth; we're dealing with that. We're working with that group to make it more proactive, workplace health and safety being the front end of that piece.

I can only say that in my view, looking to the future and looking to the jobs that we've committed in our government, 725,000 new jobs, we've created on the first year of government over 100,000 net new jobs. Ontario's leading the way, putting confidence in the economy, and we are about creating jobs. I want to conclude with one remark: The best social program for a person that I'm aware of is a job.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm always so pleased to participate in a debate, in particular when we get to hear from members opposite and their opinions regarding workers in Ontario. I can tell you, coming from my riding of Windsor-Sandwich, we certainly have a significant number of workers who are not at all pleased with the Harris government to date and their record so far in terms of restoring some sort of balance. What they've done in fact is completely tip the scales in the other direction. As a Liberal Party, we're certainly not pleased to see that.

1700

I am happy to stand in support of the motion that's being forwarded by the NDP caucus today. For the 15 months that the government has been in operation, if not a little longer, there really has been a significant impact of this government's policy on workers in Ontario. Whether we're speaking about the kinds of bills being presented by the Ministry of Labour and passed through the House — there have been several of those and they've been done, not with an eye to improve the workplace, but simply with an eye to take rights away from workers, rights that have been honed over the years through Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments. Now you choose to roll back the hands of time into the Dark Ages.

There are many people who view the government as creating a huge divide. There is no justice here. You are eliminating the middle class. When you say you're creating work and more jobs, you know you're actually way off the mark. You've got 725,000 jobs in your term and you will not hit your mark. You are currently 80,000 jobs behind where you said you would be during your campaign.

If we look at the kinds of jobs that have been created, as the Minister of Labour said in the House the other day, the greatest percentage of those have been for women. That may well be. I will guess, because we will certainly

see soon the kinds of jobs that are being created by the Harris government, that those jobs are not the same kinds of jobs that the Ontario economy produced in our past. They are lower-wage jobs, they are jobs with less benefits and they are huge numbers of jobs in the service industry. We will get the facts, because the outcome will be exactly that.

I'll give you a perfect example. Your Attorney General chose to close eight regional offices of the family support plan in Ontario. You caused the job loss in my community of Windsor of very skilled and experienced workers. What you are doing today is rehiring workers, clerk positions, in the Toronto market. Firstly, you have a net loss of jobs within the ministry, but you are counting those few jobs you are hiring. They are jobs with less pay and fewer benefits, less experienced people dealing with huge backlogs of crisis created by this government in the area of family support.

Currently in my office I have a list of 38 cases that have been faxed to the Attorney General three times to be rectified by his ministry. To date they have not done it. We expect to be hearing many, many more cases of people before the changes that the Attorney General supposedly brought in to help the situation. It became a complete disaster and he still has not sorted it out. Much has been done this way by the government in every ministry. They have created the havoc to gain public support, to say, "See, the system is broken."

The Ministry of Health is not immune to this. When we look at the kinds of jobs that are lost in Ontario, a significant number of those are in the health care field. In my community last week alone we had yet another announcement: hundreds of nurses losing their jobs at our long-term-care facility. Across Ontario we have thousands of nurses on the street today.

When the minister stands in this House, he says: "There's going to be a little bit of an adjustment there in the system. The private sector will be able to pick those people up and retrain them and work them back in." At what cost and at what wage and at what benefit for those workers? You'll count those new jobs as part of your 725,000, which you won't reach, but those will be jobs with less pay, with fewer benefits, and they certainly won't have the stability that the jobs in the past in Ontario had.

Years ago, when the Ford Motor Co was building its company, it always said, "If we don't have our workers buying our cars, we won't be able to sell cars." The difference there: A huge employer currently today in my riding, they have an attitude about their workforce. They believe that their workers really are partners with them and they care what level of wage they earn and they care what kind of income and status they have in their communities, what level of benefits, because when their workers are happy and their workers are buying their cars, they know the company will be successful.

Let's look at what companies said when the Employment Standards Act came up for review. You made changes in that act. You said you were going to improve the act; what you did was lower standards for the average worker across Ontario. When Chrysler Canada was in the middle of negotiations with the CAW, the CAW managed

to include the previous standards for employment in the contract. Why would Chrysler Canada agree to write into its contract the employment standards this Harris government has selected to remove? Chrysler Canada knows that is simply good business practice. Chrysler Canada also believes that it needs to be open and fair and very up front with its workforce because the workers at Chrysler Canada are an integral part of Chrysler Canada's success story.

If we look at Buzz Hargrove and his history with the previous Liberal government, our Liberal Premier had an open-door policy with him. They had regular meetings in his office right here in this —

Mr Bisson: As it was our policy.

Mrs Papatello: Absolutely. They had an open-door policy with Buzz Hargrove and all the union leaders. They had regular meetings in the Premier's office. The same simply cannot be said by Premier Mike Harris. He does not have an open-door policy. There are many, many organizations, groups of people, that simply cannot get their point across to the Premier. It's one thing to have a difference of opinion; it's quite another not to have the opportunity to express opinion.

Therein lies the difference with the Harris government. They are about mantra and they are about theory only, because when they put their theories into practice they simply don't work. You are looking for massive cuts to fund a tax break that many economists say is very ill advised, and that is certainly not timely, given a look at your budget and your statements. Even previous Conservative governments had significant debt problems. Even when your last Conservative Premier left office, you had \$35 billion of debt; 1982 had the highest debt ratio in Ontario's history. That, my friends, was under a Conservative government. You have no shining record in controlling your budgets and you certainly don't today.

Much of your cuts have been so ill advised and misplaced that you are still running deficits that are embarrassing for your government. You're not going to get out of it anyway. You're behind on your job creation. You're not providing tax cuts at the time and the pace you said you would, so you've had to back off on that promise as well. You cut health care when you promised you wouldn't touch health care. Really, you walked through a campaign saying you would do anything the people wanted to hear, but at the end of the day you took office and you're doing only what your reformist theory is telling you to do, which simply doesn't work. We have massive cuts to health care, cuts that are negatively impacting on patients in Ontario. Eventually this will come down to every man and woman on the street in Ontario. They will know that the Harris government simply does not work.

I fully support the motion.

Interruption.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Mr Mackenzie should know better.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Please remove them from the gallery.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A reference was made by the member for Ottawa-Rideau that Mr Mackenzie was in the gallery, and the implication

was that he was shouting from the gallery. Mr Mackenzie, the former member for Hamilton East, had in fact departed from the gallery some time previous to that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'd like to join my caucus colleagues in speaking to the opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the third party. The honourable member has put forth several accusations against the Ontario government concerning the needs of workers in Ontario. The member will know that this government takes the needs of Ontario workers very seriously. As the member for Simcoe Centre, I take the needs of my constituents seriously because I know that I represent hardworking people. My government's record of legislation, initiatives and policy direction proves this.

1710

We know that Ontario needs more real, lasting jobs and that the private sector, not the government, is best able to create these jobs. The Mike Harris government recognizes this and that small and medium-sized businesses are the engine that drives our economy. Statistics show that 87% of all new employment comes from small business. We also know there has to be a balance between encouraging business to operate in our province, in our local communities, while providing workers with the rights and protections they deserve.

If we know this, why did the NDP create unprecedented regulations and red tape for small business during their short term in office? Why did the NDP introduce job-killing legislation that removed years of balance of power between employers and their employees, shifted the balance in favour of unions and ignored fiscal realities, that sent a message to business that they should consider investing elsewhere? If the NDP was so concerned about the rights of workers, why did the NDP vote against Bill 7, which now gives workers the right to vote in confidence and democratically on whether to join a union?

An issue of great importance to workers is the concern that they must be protected from a workplace injury and compensated and rehabilitated in the event an accident occurs on the job. If the NDP is as aware of this as they claim to be, why did they do nothing to make the workers' compensation system more efficient and effective? Why did the NDP do nothing to make sure the WCB could financially support itself well into the next century?

The Mike Harris government is committed to making workers' compensation more effective and efficient. We are committed to making sure there is a system in place that workers will be able to count on for years to come. But the NDP will tell the public that these government initiatives are about giving more power to big business, that we should leave the current system alone. If we leave the current system alone we will drive business away from Ontario. We will let the WCB spiral into greater debt until it can no longer function.

Workers need to have confidence in their workers' compensation system. Employers deserve to know that the assessment rates they pay will go towards looking after their employees in the event of an injury. Because

workers' compensation is so important to Ontario workers, the government has begun the process of restoring the workers' compensation system. Yet the opposition still chooses to speak against a government policy direction that will make WCB more financially accountable, increase workplace health and safety and make it easier for workers and their employers to understand the process.

Ontario's workers' compensation system is broke. It has an unfunded liability of \$10.9 billion that prevents the board from sustaining it. The NDP allowed workers' compensation assessment rates to escalate to the second-highest level in the country, to a point where business has told us they can no longer afford to keep their doors open. While the NDP let assessment rates increase, they also allowed the board's unfunded liability to escalate to a point where we now face the challenge of sustaining the WCB.

There are some facts about the WCB that the leader of the third party does not seem to want to mention: (1) Ontario's average assessment rate of \$3 is the second-highest in the country; and (2) Ontario's rates are 32% higher than the national average. Since the member for Rainy River is interested in comparing Ontario's minimum wage with that of our neighbouring American states, he may wish to know that Ontario's WCB rates are, on average, 40% higher than those of our neighbouring American states. Perhaps our employers could afford to pay their employees more money if their WCB assessment rates were less. The WCB has an unfunded liability of \$10.9 billion, which threatens its viability in the future. This unfunded liability exceeds that of all other provinces combined, which is certainly not fair to Ontario's workers.

Let's talk about sustainability. What the member for Rainy River does not mention is that his party, while in government, turned the WCB's investment portfolio to cover benefit commitments in the past. They drew \$1.65 billion from its \$7-billion investment portfolio from 1991 to 1995. Instead of re-evaluating the mandate of the WCB, the NDP chose to de-index benefits with its Bill 165, affecting 125,000 injured workers. This NDP change is projected to reduce the unfunded liability by the year 2014, but it would still leave an unfunded liability of \$12 billion.

The WCB's unfunded liability is just one of the many problems my government will have to address if it is to maintain a viable system for Ontario workers in the years to come. There are many problems with the current WCB system, problems that work against the needs of employees. For example, the system is rife with bureaucracy. Workers can't understand it. Employees say it takes too long to settle a claim. Employers find the current system too confusing and difficult to understand. The current system doesn't encourage employees and employers to work together to prevent accidents. It pits employees and employers against each other, which benefits no one. The current system spends hundreds of millions of dollars on programs which attempt to return injured workers to the workforce, yet there is little to show for it.

I'd next like to speak about the need for accident prevention. The Minister of Labour has recognized the need for accident prevention, which is also good news for workers. This is important because the current system fails to recognize the vital link between compensation and prevention. The WCB's original mandate was to compensate workers for workplace accidents and help them to return to work as soon as possible. My government will see that the functions of prevention and compensation are coordinated under one roof, just as in British Columbia, Quebec, the Yukon, and New Brunswick.

We are not reducing the health and safety inspectors and we are improving health and safety certification training. We are reviewing health and safety delivery organizations to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible.

The Ministry of Labour is working with a Safe Communities initiative, a partnership between the private and public sectors which is proven to dramatically reduce workplace injuries. We are providing \$450,000 to the young workers' awareness program, which educates teenagers about their rights, responsibilities and dangers in the workplace.

Addressing the needs of workers means we also have a duty to address the negative impact that rising assessment rates are having on job creation and investment in this province. We need to address the WCB's unfunded liability and the unnecessary risk this is causing for Ontario's workers. We need to develop a workers' compensation system that will help workers get back to work in a timely fashion. We need to make sure workers receive compensation in a timely manner without an endless sea of bureaucracy, paperwork and red tape for them and for their employers.

We are moving in that direction because the government of Ontario is committed to improving the lives of workers in this province. Like so many Ontarians, my constituents take great pride in their work, but there need to be more jobs out there. We need to encourage more investment in this province. Small business and the private sector have demonstrated they can best create the jobs.

The NDP sent a message to business to invest their dollars outside of Ontario. They sent a message to employees and employers that they don't need to work together to settle disputes and claims. Their policies have pitted employees and employers against each other, which benefits no one.

The policies which my government has introduced over the last year don't take rights away from workers and they certainly don't balance power in favour of large companies. We have an obligation to our small businesses and to the people of Ontario to create a climate where entrepreneurs can be rewarded, where workers' rights are respected, where economic prosperity can thrive and where people can find jobs. We also have an obligation to ensure our workers have a workers' compensation system that will be there when they need it well into the next century. The direction my government is taking will make that a reality, and I thank the member for Rainy River for giving me an opportunity to set the record straight.

1720

Mr Bradley: I'm pleased to be able to address the House on the motion which is brought forward by the New Democratic Party this afternoon and to indicate that many of the items contained in this motion are items deserving of public debate.

I want to say, first of all, that I'm pleased we have in this House the broadcast service of the Legislative Assembly, which celebrated its 10th anniversary on October 13 of this year. Previous to that, the people of the province did not have the opportunity to view the debates in the Legislative Assembly on an ongoing basis. They had to rely on interpretation by those who run newspapers or radio stations or television stations or newsmagazines, or read Hansard.

What happened was that many members of the assembly could be what you'd call good constituency people, could know everybody in the city, who were very good at that aspect of the job but didn't necessarily make a contribution in this House. There are many aspects to a member of Parliament's job, and this is one of them.

I think there's an advantage to what I call gavel-to-gavel coverage, whether it's a local council, the federal Parliament or the provincial Parliament, because the public would want to see the debate as it unfolded and the points that were made. That is why I was pleased that back in 1986 the Liberal government of David Peterson implemented a resolution I had as a private member's bill a number of years ago, and that was that we have this broadcast service.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): How much did it cost?

Mr Bradley: There will be those who will raise the cost of it. Of course, in a democracy there is always a cost to whatever we do. We want to ensure that the member for Burlington South, or any other member, when he answers a question, can be seen by his own constituents.

What I want to point out is how important it is that debates of this kind be available to the public through this broadcast service, and I'm pleased that it continues unhindered and uncensored.

The resolution this afternoon is one which deals with the polarization that's taking place in this province. It dwells extensively on labour legislation and issues related to labour and management.

I listened to one of the Conservative speakers earlier accuse the NDP of swinging the pendulum far too far to the left in the matter of labour legislation, and contend to this House that in fact what the Conservatives were doing was simply bringing it back to the middle where there's some balance. I cannot agree with that contention. What has happened under the Conservative regime is that the pendulum has swung completely to the right. The balance has moved in a different direction, and I think that has provoked much of the opposition we have seen, some of it very vociferous and some of it in large numbers as a result of that polarization.

We see the same thing happening in the United States. The Republican Party in the United States — and I know many of the ideas for this particular government, particularly the people in the Premier's office and advisers to the Premier, come from the Republicans south of the

border. All you need do is watch what happens in the various states of the United States, what is being proposed at the latest Republican convention, and it's reflected in what's happening in this assembly with this government. I'm surprised, because I know many Canadian nationalists who used to be in the Progressive Conservative Party who would find it appalling that the Conservative Party would be adopting, holus-bolus, ideas from south of the border as befitting our country.

I think there is a Canadian solution. I think we are a different country. I think we're a different province from the state of Mississippi or Tennessee or Alabama or some of the more regressive states in the United States in terms of social programs and labour legislation.

I want to look at a couple of the items contained in this resolution. I want to comment, because the resolution makes reference to it, on the recent dispute between General Motors and the Canadian Auto Workers. One of the paramount issues, if not the most important issue, was what is referred to as outsourcing, and I guess a corollary of that would be downsizing. What people are seeing in the trade union movement, people who are the rank-and-file members of many of these unions and others who are not unionized, is a situation which is arising where companies are making unprecedented profits while at the same time they are reducing the workforces. In days gone by, when companies were not making a lot of money or losing money or were in difficult economic circumstances and laid people off, nobody liked to see that happen, but at least it was understood that that is why it was happening.

Today we have a different circumstance. We have many companies making unprecedented profits while at the same time casting the bodies out in the streets, the bodies of workers who will no longer have jobs. Many of us have to ask the question, where will the jobs come from? What are we to do with these people? I know that in the dogma and the theory and the ideology of many of the people who sit across from us in the Conservative caucus, this is considered to be sensible. They use the term "rightsizing" rather than downsizing. But I really think you must ask what is going to happen to your neighbours, what is going to happen to your relatives and friends and other residents of this province when we see this continuous downsizing.

If we in this assembly do not call to account the corporate executives, who often rise in terms of their position within the company and in terms of the amount of money they make based on their ability to downsize the company and make it, as they would say, more efficient so it is rising in the stock market — in some companies, the executives in fact make bonuses based on their position within the stock market, so they have a vested interest in this so-called downsizing that takes place.

That is what many of the people in the trade union movement are worrying about. They're worrying about that happening. In my own city of St Catharines — I mentioned in this House the other day, and the Canadian Auto Workers are very concerned about this — we had close to 10,000 workers at General Motors just a few years ago. Today the workforce stands at 5,300 people. There has been significant downsizing, and one plant, the

axle plant on Ontario Street in St Catharines, was due to close again; that was announced three years ago. Under the collective agreement signed with General Motors and the CAW, the plant was allowed to continue to exist for three more years. I am pleased that the negotiators for the Canadian Auto Workers have been able to obtain an agreement that this plant will continue for the duration of this contract — in other words, yet another three years — through the collective bargaining process.

Something else unique came out of this agreement, and that was that the Canadian Auto Workers were able to have in the contract a provision which overrode the new labour laws of the province of Ontario as passed by this government. I can recall that General Motors was supportive of some of those changes this government made, yet they signed a collective agreement that said, "Notwithstanding the new laws of the province, here is the regime under which we will exist." Again, that was because of the negotiating taking place at the table. I'm sure all of us who represent communities that have auto workers are pleased that there has been a collective agreement signed, and perhaps I'm being presumptuous in anticipating that it will be ratified, but certainly if it is I'll be mighty pleased.

A second one is mentioned here. I've talked about the old children's game of pin the tail on the donkey. Unfortunately, this government — I must compliment you as a politician — has been quite successful in dividing and conquering. For instance, we've had a strike at the regional municipality of Niagara. Now, the regional councillors and the management of the regional municipality of Niagara weren't looking for a strike. They were faced with circumstances where this government is downloading so much and at the same time withdrawing so much in terms of financial support that the regional government was in a position of cutting back, of wanting to contract out, to privatize, and to make several changes to the collective agreement which were not in keeping with what the workers wanted to see.

A lot of people will point the finger at the regional government when in fact they should point it northward towards Toronto. Just as I watch you divide teachers against teachers, elementary against secondary, secondary against adult education, board members against somebody else — everyone is pointing a finger at someone else when, if you've played the game of pin the tail on the donkey, the donkey exists here at Queen's Park. I don't use that as a disparaging term; I use it as a game which children used to play, figuratively.

I see what's happening out there. I see people who are very apprehensive about their positions. They are everyday working people, whether they're working with their hands or working with their minds or a combination of both, which most people do. They are people who are vitally concerned about what's happening in this province. I think what this government is doing is dividing this province more and more, polarizing this province, just as we see a polarization taking place in the USA.

1730

The member for Scarborough North, Alvin Curling, raised an issue in the House the other day about the Occupational Disease Panel and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers. We have been concerned that

this government would be abandoning these. I had the privilege of being Minister of the Environment in this province for a little over five years and I recognize the implications for pollution in the province and the effect it could have on people. But in a direct sense, people are much more impacted by workplace occupational health and safety. I am apprehensive, as they are, when they see that this government could be moving in the direction of closing down the disease panel and the health clinics for Ontario workers, because they have been important in trying to identify and deal with important diseases and afflictions related to the workplace.

What we have created is an unbalanced situation in Ontario, a movement drastically to the right, of course a movement which pleases Preston Manning and many in the right wing of the Reform Party but, I suspect, not many in the more moderate end of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Another thing that has happened in many ministries — I know it happened in the Ministry of the Environment and it's now happening in the Ministry of Labour and reference is made to it in this resolution. It says: "Whereas the Mike Harris government has laid off hundreds of workers at the Ministry of Labour, including key staff in enforcement of employment standards and health and safety laws." That's one of the whereases. The problem with that is that people who wish to seek redress through the intervention of their government are prevented from doing so by the fact that there aren't sufficient staff to deal with the matters that they draw to their attention.

Good employers and good employees don't worry about this. Good employers don't run into these circumstances, because they're treating their employees fairly and are living up to the laws of the province. This staff is needed because of the employers who are not prepared to live up to the laws that exist in this province. You give an unfair advantage to those employers once again by abandoning this particular aspect of government intervention, which I think is positive intervention in that case.

This resolution says: "Whereas the Mike Harris government is driving down the standard of living of working families, while putting more money in the pockets of wealthy corporations and individuals, sharpening the divide between the haves and the have-nots." Obviously, people who are at the lower end of the economic spectrum are people who are in more need of government intervention or government assistance than those who are at the top, yet the tax break you're giving, in terms of actual dollars will benefit the richest people in our society the most. I don't want to pick on bank presidents, but that's what comes to mind just now, bank presidents. They will receive a huge amount of money back as a result of your tax cut, whereas the people at the lowest level, while on a percentage basis they may receive more, are in actual dollars going to receive very little.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Did I hear Conrad Black's name mentioned?

Hon Mr Jackson: No. I said Liberal backbenchers.

Mr Bradley: I see. I thought it was Conrad Black you had said.

I can understand, because when the Premier goes to the fund-raisers, they're shaking his hand, they're patting him on the back. He heads into northern Ontario and takes the money out of northern Ontario —

Mr Bartolucci: And doesn't return anything.

Mr Bradley: And doesn't return anything, as the member for Sudbury says. Yes, I understand who is going to the fund-raisers. Once you deregulate all the people who are regulated — in other words, regulated to protect the consumers, to protect the environment or protect workers in the workplace — those people are going to be delighted, so they'll show up at the fundraiser with their cheque made out to you. I understand that is happening. I don't know why you'd be proud of that, but I certainly understand that's happening. Certainly, a lot of the legislation you're passing is going to fill the coffers of the Progressive Conservative Party.

You are probably wondering how I could work Conrad Black into this. I've worked the tax break into it. Conrad Black fits this.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Well, the Minister of Health is here and I see something mentioned about health in this resolution; it says "occupational health." The people of St Catharines are asking, "Will they be closing hospitals in St Catharines?" We have the Shaver Hospital, the Hotel Dieu Hospital and the General in St Catharines. People have supported those three hospitals over the years; I have been one of those supporters as well.

Now they're fearing that the Minister of Health will send — I was going to say "his henchmen"; I don't know if that's acceptable in this House — whoever it is, this commission he claims he's at arm's length from, into St Catharines to close hospitals that are needed, just as he's done in Sudbury and Thunder Bay and Warton and who knows where next — St Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener-Waterloo.

I am worried about that because there appears to be a mantra out there, an ideological bent against health care services. We seem to be moving towards the American system where there's one set of rules for the rich and one for the rest. There's a lot to say about the United States that's good, but why you'd want to ever accept their health care system, one wouldn't know. Because in the US, if you've got money, you get better health care than if you haven't.

One thing people have been proud of — the Davis Conservatives, the Peterson Liberals and the Rae New Democrats were proud of this — is that in Ontario in years gone by, and I hope in years ahead, regardless of how much money you had in your wallet, you got the same degree of health care, the same quality of health care as others. That is something that speaks well of all parties who have ruled over the years. I fear that is leaving now. I fear that with the latest agreement they've signed with the doctors, somehow the patients are going to pay. Meanwhile, we'll continue with the tax cut, which this government seems overly committed to.

How are these matters going to be dealt with in the news media? In the past there has been a variety of comment out there, a variety of newspaper opinion in the editorial boards and in terms of columnists. But now

Conrad Black and Hollinger have taken over so many of the newspapers they will now control 58 of Canada's 104 daily newspapers. That is unhealthy. It's unhealthy no matter who controls all of those newspapers, whether it's a person with a liberal, socialist, conservative or any kind of political philosophy. It's simply unhealthy for one person to enjoy that kind of ownership.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): To the member for St Catharines, I'm doing my best to trace this back to the opposition day, and I know you will, so if you can explain to me how that relates back, I will be happy to listen.

Mr Bradley: I know this Speaker, of all people, would not want to defend the rich and privileged and powerful in this country, because he's been, I say in a compliment to him, one who has been prepared to tilt at windmills and other things over the years. He has been one who has not been afraid to challenge even the Premier of this province within the confines of the caucus and in other areas. But now he is totally impartial.

The point I'm making is, when we look at a resolution of this kind, how can we possibly ensure that it can be reported appropriately? I don't think it can be as long as Conrad Black has taken over the many of the newspapers of this country. You will know that Jim Travers, an outstanding person at the Ottawa Citizen — I am told by the member for Nepean that this is the case — had to leave the job because there was interference coming from one of Conrad Black's people, probably Mr Radler or somebody. As a result, he's had to step aside.

At the Montreal Gazette a person who had a moderate point of view, Joan Fraser, the top editor there, was shunted aside because she obviously felt the interference that was taking place. She was probably wondering how a resolution like this would be covered in a paper that was owned by Conrad Black and the Black empire.

You will recall that the Jerusalem Post at one time had a moderate, fairly middle-of-the-road opinion in terms of its editorial content. Mr Black took that over and moved it drastically to the right. He has done that with many newspapers.

1740

I see that Christopher Young had said on the CBC, surely a sound source of information if I ever saw one — the CBC National the last two nights has had Conrad Black as its subject. We saw how Mr Black was moving aside people with whom he disagrees. So what he's doing is imposing censorship, censorship which I'm afraid will not allow for the kind of reporting that should take place on this resolution. If anybody disagrees with him in the newsroom, if anybody disagrees with him in the editorial room, they're out the door. The pressure is there.

An unprecedented personal attack was launched on Christopher Young by Mr Black, the message being, "You'd better hit the road because your views don't fit my newspapers." I look at it and say "shall this country's major newspapers be controlled by one individual, especially an individual with an ideological agenda such as Mr Black has?"

It's not just that I disagree with his viewpoint, which I do 95% of the time, but it's that one individual is in

this situation. I asked the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism about this, and he simply said: "Well, that's not my worry. It's the free enterprise system." Yet you will recall, I'm sure, something that I read into the record previously that talked about all of this transfer of ownership taking place behind closed doors in an uncompetitive situation, not out there in the free market that everybody talks about, but behind closed doors. I know that fairminded moderate Conservatives of the ilk of Premier Davis, must be concerned when they see Conrad Black taking over and putting forth only those views which are of the pretty far right.

Now in the St Catharines Standard we have Barbara Amiel, the wife of Conrad Black, who could never be accused of being a raving socialist. We have Andrew Coyne, certainly no ultra Liberal, and Giles Gherson, who is a little bit different from those two. Now they will be imposed on Southam newspapers across the country, newspapers that previously had people who probably would agree with the contents of this particular resolution this afternoon.

I know what Mr Black had to say on this, and this fits in again, I must say. Mr Black went on to say this in one article: "And that means separating news from comment," which is fair enough, "assuring a reasonable variety of comment, and not just the overwhelming avalanche of soft, left, bland, envious, mediocre pap which has poured like sludge through the centre pages of most of the Southam papers for some time."

I don't agree with Mr Black in that regard, but what's frightening is that he views what has been in the newspapers that were owned by Southam previously in that particular way. That tells me we're not going to see fair comment coming from those newspapers on the resolution which has been proposed this afternoon from the New Democratic Party. It may not be a perfect resolution, it may not be one that engenders full support from everybody in this House, but it serves to put before us some significant issues that are preoccupying the people of this province, issues which are going to bring about a major protest in the city of Toronto, a protest that I hope will be peaceful, that I hope will send a message to the government and allow for people to express their views in a non-violent and a peaceful fashion and in a fashion which is most effective.

I know you, Mr Speaker, as others, hope that this will be the case. We always welcome people who want to express their views in that particular manner. No doubt there will be thousands upon thousands of people converging on Toronto to express that point of view this weekend. While the government may wish to dismiss some of the people in that protest, I think the government should understand that many of those people represent others out there who may not be coming to Toronto, who may not want to participate in a demonstration, but who have genuine concerns that this government is moving too drastically and too quickly to change this province to a right-wing regime.

The Speaker: I thank the member for St Catharines for that timely and topical intervention. Further debate. The member for Dufferin-Peel.

Applause.

Mr Tilson: Quiet. You're using up my time.

I'd like to make a few comments with respect to the resolution brought forward by Mr Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party. Reading this resolution and listening to some of the comments, particularly from the New Democratic Party, it would appear that they didn't realize what happened in the last election. Certainly I've had an opportunity, representing my riding of Dufferin-Peel since 1990 — many of the members of the New Democratic Party, most of them at least, have represented their ridings for that same period of time, and during that time there was a debate with respect to deficits, with respect to tax increases, with respect to recessions, with respect to all kinds of things, anti-business laws.

When our turn came to be elected in this province, we made a number of commitments, and when I say "we," members of the Progressive Conservative Party. We made a number of promises. We made a number of commitments to change the process, to change the way things have been done in this province, certainly to change the way, in particular, things had been done in this province since 1990. All of what I've heard today and all of what is in this resolution is to return to those days.

During that time, we discovered that we were spending more money than was coming in in this province. The debt was increasing. The debt when the NDP came to power was \$44 billion; it's now about \$100 billion. That's a lot of money. We haven't even made a commitment in our promises to eliminate that debt. We have made a commitment to eliminate the deficit, we've made a commitment to cut back on taxes, and we're honouring all of our commitments.

With respect to the Workers' Compensation Board, there have been some comments made, particularly by the members of the New Democratic Party, as to the status of that institution. The unfunded liability is at \$10.9 billion. You must remember this: There was a building put up right near SkyDome. It cost \$200 million to construct that building on land that the province of Ontario didn't even own, for some unknown reason. All of that money, quite frankly, should be put towards the workers of this province, the workers who have had problems with their health and with respect to benefits.

I listened to their comments and I listened to what they have tried to do during their reign and how they boasted about what they have done for workers of this province. That was one of the things that they did: They put up a building that was no longer needed. My goodness, at that particular time there were all kinds of rental vacancies throughout the city of Toronto, and yet they chose to put up a building, \$200 million, on land they didn't even own. We still shake our heads as to how the workers of this province are suffering from that policy.

The members for Nepean and for Durham East have quoted a book put out by the former Premier of this province, Bob Rae. Someone gave me the book as a gift. I don't know whether anybody's going to buy it or not, but there were some interesting quotes that have been put forward, many of which I think are applicable to today. This is the former leader of the New Democratic Party, the party that's put forward this resolution today.

Some time has been spent on the social contract, Bill 48. Bill 48, you may remember, was the bill that did

away with collective bargaining in this province by that party over there. They did away with collective bargaining, and they are the ones who are standing up for workers in this province. It's called collective bargaining. Remember that? Remember how you did away with it?

Mr Rae, in his book, commented on that topic. There was certainly some time spent, because I'm sure it was very controversial in his caucus, and it appears that it was. He made some interesting comments. He said:

"I felt then and I feel today that the men and women in the public sector in Ontario were poorly served by their leaders, who were caught in a time warp and a rhetorical swamp that they were unable to leave. They were aided and abetted by the usual gang of would-be proletarian anarchists, who were only too happy to attack a social democratic government no matter what it did, and by some on the left who could never adjust to the necessary discipline of political responsibility."

That came from the former Premier of this province, the leader of the party that is now bringing forward this resolution today.

It's as if money is no object. "Spend it." The quote was given by the member for Nepean, I think, talking about what Bob White said. I'd like to make a few comments about, "Don't worry, just spend it, and don't worry about the debt and the deficit of this province." There were some comments made in the book about that.

1750

They referred to — page 205 of the book — senior cabinet ministers and he met with the leadership of the labour movement. They had dinner in a private room at Le Rendez Vous Restaurant. I'm not sure where that is, but I'm sure it's a delightful place. The key union leaders were Gord Wilson and Julie Davis of the OFL, Leo Gerard of the Steelworkers, Fred Upshaw from OPSEU, Judy Darcy and Sid Ryan from CUPE, and Buzz Hargrove of the Canadian Auto Workers — the usual gang.

"It was a difficult meeting," according to Mr Rae. "Hargrove couldn't understand why we couldn't just keep pushing ahead on our current fiscal path. Others had great difficulty with the notion that a social democratic party should bother about debts or deficit at all since Keynes, and certainly since the beginning of the widespread deficit financing of Canada in the 1970s it was simply accepted on the left that to worry about these things was a monopoly of the right and not something that anyone in the labour movement or the NDP should worry about."

That's the philosophy of this New Democratic Party that's trying to protect the workers of this province. Money is no object. Spend it. Who cares whether the debt's \$100 billion? Who cares whether the debt is \$150 billion? Spend it. Well, we in the Progressive Conservative Party do care and I can tell you that most of us on this side won by substantial margins. We're not boasting about that. Certainly there was a large percentage of people that voted for me, and I don't pretend that they were members of the Progressive Conservative Party. I'm sure there are members of the New Democratic Party who voted for us. Why? Because they didn't like your wild-spending philosophy. They knew that you had to get rid of red tape, that you had to get rid of too many bureaucrats that were hanging around this place, that you

had to get rid of too many politicians, that you had to stop raising taxes. That's what you were doing in this province, and indeed we ended social contract; we brought back collective bargaining to this province.

We promised changes in this province and we're completing those changes. We're effecting those changes. Obviously the whole tenor of this resolution is that they don't like what we're doing. Well, that's what we were elected to do. The members of the New Democratic Party in particular are telling us: "Don't do what you were elected to do. Forget about it." That's what you did when you were elected. Of course there's a wonderful quote from Bob Rae on that one as well. Bob Rae made a quote with respect to that in the same book. He made a quote on promises. You know what he said about that, about advice on political promises? This was made at page 221. He said: "So make fewer promises. I wish I had." That's the whole attitude of the New Democratic Party. They don't care. They blather on about things that they have no idea what they're talking about.

I can tell you that we're in for a very difficult time in the city of Toronto on Friday. Fortune magazine, one of the articles in the clippings today, commented that Toronto was the best city in the world in which to work and live. An article by Mr MacDonald, I think, said, "...a bunch of leftist union bosses goes all out to bring Metro to its knees." I hope that they don't do that. I think we have been elected to complete our mandate and we intend to do that. We intend to honour our commitments. The very first proviso in the resolution talks about how they want a more prosperous Ontario. Well, we watched what you've done in the last five years and you have destroyed Ontario and we're going to bring Ontario back to the prosperous stage that it deserves.

Mr Bisson: It has been interesting to listen to the comments from the Conservative side of the House, where they go on at length about how they are defending workers' rights, and in fact try to tell the people of this province that they are not taking away any rights. The record should speak for itself. I think any fairminded individual watching this debate and knowing full well what's happened in their community, asks themselves a couple of questions. They say: "Who was it? What government repealed Bill 40? Was it the Mike Harris government? Yes, it was."

What did they take away? They took away the rights of certification when it comes to workers, to make certification more difficult. They took away access to the employer's property that was put in under the Bob Rae government to put in a level playing field when it came to organizing. They took away the anti-scab legislation.

By the way, the workers from S.A. Armstrong who were here today are reeling in the wrath of what this government has left them, because now their employer has got them out on a picket line and is going to keep them there as long as it can. Why? Because Mike Harris says it's a good thing to hire scabs in the workplaces of Ontario and to try to push the workers out. He's really happy. That's what the Tories want. They want scabs to take the places of the workers at S.A. Armstrong. Is that a takeback? I think it is. The government members are trying to say they haven't affected workers' rights. It

seems to me, just on that score, they've affected workers quite badly.

We look at Bill 26. Do we remember Bill 26, the "ominous bill" as it was called by our former Speaker? In that bill they took away all successor rights for public employees in this province. Is that a takeaway? It sounds like one to me. It certainly sounds like the government said, "We want to move to privatize every workplace in the province that we can that is now under the control of the public sector, and we're going to take away successor rights so employees don't have any rights to a collective agreement when the work is transferred over to the private sector." Sounds like a takeaway to me.

They go on to say, "We haven't done anything under the Employment Standards Act." They limited how much you can go after if you're after your employer because he or she hasn't paid wages. Sounds like a takeback to me. They've also put time limits on when you can make a claim. Presently there's no limit to it; they're moving to 45 days. Many times workers don't find out about their rights for a period of time, and if you find out after the 45 days, under this legislation you're not going to have any rights whatsoever. Sounds like a takeback to me.

They're excluding unionized employees from getting access to fair justice under the Employment Standards Act. It sounds like a takeback to me. They've frozen the minimum wage of workers in this province, something that not even the Newt Gingriches of the Republican Party of the United States have wanted to do; actually, they've increased the rates of workers in the United States to a level of about \$7 in comparison to Ontario. What does Mike Harris do? Mike Harris says, "Freeze the wages because we don't want workers having a fair return for the work they give to their employers; we want workers to freeze," because that's what they're going to do when you freeze their wages.

They've eliminated, under the wage protection act, the guarantee the NDP government had put in place that workers had the right to get the dollars they were owed by their employers. What does this government do? They limit it to a \$4,000 ceiling. Sounds like a takeback to me.

Under pay equity, hundreds of thousands of women in Ontario are not going to get access to pay equity. Why? Because the Mike Harris government, because Dianne Cunningham, the minister for women's issues, has turned her back along with the rest of the cabinet and walked away from the women of this province and they are leaving them high and dry. Why? Because they want to level the playing field to allow the employers to exploit women. That's what you're doing.

You have a lot of nerve to stand in this House and say you're not taking away the rights of the working people of this province. The list goes on and on. What it comes down to is a litany of misery for the workers of this province. Why? Because the Mike Harris government

says, "I shall take away from workers, I shall give to employers, because I believe employers have more rights than workers, so that in the end the workers be damned." That's not the Ontario we stand for.

The Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1805.

The Speaker: Members, take your seats, please.

Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 3. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Grandmaître, Bernard	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	McLeod, Lyn
Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Christopherson, David	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Parker, John L.
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bassett, Isabel	Hardeman, Ernie	Saunderson, William
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Shea, Derwyn
Carr, Gary	Hudak, Tim	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Jackson, Cameron	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Tascona, Joseph N.
Danford, Harry	Johnson, David	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Jordan, W. Leo	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	Kells, Morley	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Wilson, Jim
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ford, Douglas B.	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, Terence H.
Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan	
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 19, the nays are 55.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1808.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
112	4716	2	8	there in the riding — Herb McGirr, working at the track,

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries
 Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
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Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		

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		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Première session, 36^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Thursday 24 October 1996****Jeudi 24 octobre 1996****Speaker**
Honourable Chris Stockwell**Président**
L'honorable Chris Stockwell**Clerk**
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (IMPAIRED DRIVING), 1996

LOI DE 1996

MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CONDUITE AVEC FACULTÉS AFFAIBLIES)

Mrs Marland moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to Impaired Driving Offences / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les infractions pour conduite avec facultés affaiblies.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I am very pleased to open the debate on my private member's Bill 85.

I express my appreciation in advance to the government and both opposition parties for their support of this bill. I know your constituents will be grateful if there are fewer drivers on the road as a result of this bill or similar legislation and will be proud of your vote in support today, as they are proud of you always.

Every year in Ontario over 500 people die in motor vehicle crashes where alcohol was a factor in the collision. If that many people were killed in a plane crash it would be the top headline in major newspapers around the world, yet we are complacent when people are killed, a few every day, by impaired drivers.

Why? Every one of those crashes could have been prevented. They're not accidents. They're crashes which could have been prevented. Every one of those crashes leaves a trail of victims in its wake: thousands of lives that are prematurely snuffed out; families and friends who never fully recover. In fact, every person in this province is a victim because impaired driving costs Ontario \$1.3 billion a year in personal financial loss, medical expenses and property damage.

Most of us know personally a family or friend whose life has been forever changed by one of those horrible crashes, like Mrs Janetta Lavery and her family. Mrs Lavery is in the gallery today. She lost her son, Warren, at age 20. We also have the tragic example of Sarah Petroni and Jerry Lynch. They were Brampton teenagers simply walking home from a movie and were struck down and killed by a drunk driver in 1994. They weren't even in another car; they were simply pedestrians. We also have the incredible example of a male driver who

received a three-year licence suspension after he drove while drunk and killed an adult. Within two weeks of this male driver getting his driver's licence back, he drove drunk and killed again. This time the victim was a child.

We are the lawmakers and we have a responsibility, on behalf of all Ontarians, to ensure that our laws and programs prevent these tragedies. Although we have made significant progress in the fight against drunk driving, we still have a huge problem on our hands. Each year in our province over 25,000 people are charged with impaired driving, and these are just the people who get caught. What does this tell us about the actual number of people who are driving while drunk every day?

One of the most disturbing trends is the increase in the number of repeat offenders, who are responsible for the majority of impaired driving convictions. Licence suspensions for a second or subsequent conviction of impaired driving have increased from 50% of all suspensions in 1987 to 65% of all suspensions in 1994. It's a pretty disgusting record. The source of these figures is the Ontario government's publication *Drinking and Driving in Ontario: Statistical Yearbook 1994*. It concludes:

"The predominance of repeat offenders illustrates (1) the need for new, innovative programs to deal with this group, and (2) the need to identify potential repeat offenders at the time of their first offence so that special measures can be implemented at that time to reduce the likelihood of subsequent offences." That's on page 41.

My private member's bill addresses both of these needs. Some members of this House will remember that I introduced an earlier bill on impaired driving in November 1994. That bill died on the order paper when the then Premier, Bob Rae, did not recall the Legislature before the general election was called in 1995.

Since the election, the Mike Harris government has enacted administrative driver's licence suspension, abbreviated as ADLS. This was one of the key measures in my original bill, and I am extremely pleased that the government's Bill 55, which includes ADLS, will be proclaimed in time for the holiday season this winter. The government will also introduce additional measures against impaired driving, as outlined in the road safety plan which was released one year ago.

1010

My private member's bill, like the road safety plan, proposes remedial measures for convicted offenders. Prior to licence reinstatement, offenders will be required to complete an education program, including alcohol and drug rehabilitation where addiction was a factor in the offence. This will help us identify and treat people who are likely to become repeat offenders.

My bill will also increase the existing penalty for repeat offenders. It will lengthen the minimum licence

suspension for a second conviction of impaired driving from two years, the current requirement, to three years, and for a third conviction of impaired driving, the suspension will increase from three years, the current requirement, to five years.

Finally, my bill will permanently revoke a driver's licence after a fourth or subsequent conviction. Based on legal advice, I have included a mechanism for appealing the permanent revocation after at least five years have passed since the licence was revoked.

The escalating licence suspensions in my bill reflect measures that already exist in other Canadian jurisdictions. For instance, Alberta and Saskatchewan also suspend drivers' licences for three years after a second conviction of impaired driving and for five years after a third conviction.

In permanently revoking the licence of hard-core repeat offenders, my bill goes further than the laws in other North American jurisdictions. None the less, there are precedents for permanent licence revocation in European nations, for instance, Finland and France.

I am committed to making the legislative changes needed to take driving privileges away permanently from impaired drivers who have repeatedly demonstrated that they cannot be trusted to operate a vehicle safely. Isn't there something terribly wrong with our laws if a person can drive drunk, get their driver's licence back and commit the same crime over and over? Eventually we must say, "Enough is enough."

This bill is quite simple and straightforward. It is about rights and responsibilities. It is about the right of every parent walking on a sidewalk with their baby in a carriage not to have to fear that a drunk driver may mount the curb and crush them both to death. It is about the responsibility of every driver to operate their vehicle in a way that does not endanger other people's health and safety. Driving is a privilege, not a right. We must earn that privilege. If we don't, society can and should take that privilege away.

I ask the House to support these measures, and I look forward to hearing the comments in support of this bill from my colleagues this morning.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to thank the member for Mississauga South for bringing forward this private member's bill. Of course, there would not be one individual in this House who would not be supportive of the fact that drunken drivers should be off the road. Of course. But I also would like at this time to thank many of those groups, especially MADD and many of the community groups, which have been advocating for years to make sure that our highways are safe and that our society is run in a manner in which we can all live peacefully.

In my short time — I know my other colleagues here want to make some contribution, and time limits us from expressing it as fully as we could — I would just make a couple of points which I think are extremely important. I strongly believe that it is the communities around us that really make a society, meaning that many of the communities that are non-profit do it voluntarily, go out and make sure that our young people or adults or people who are addicted to drugs are looked after.

I notice too that my dear colleague, with good intention and a good heart, would like this to be moved forward, and of course it is something that I would support, but I think it is so limited in itself. That government itself, that same Mike Harris government has attacked many of the communities that are doing some excellent work, cutting off their funding, making sure that they don't exist — I sometimes wondered about that — saying they can exist alone.

But if you don't have good communities doing these things, and expect that legislation will bring forward building bigger jails, greater fines, more police on the road, and that will solve it all, I don't think it will. What we should be doing first is to make sure that those communities and those organizations are supported. Give them funds. Let's put it where it should be. Government cannot do everything alone. They need the support of communities, and sometimes they need money to do so. They need the support of legislators who will give them that kind of support, not really putting them down.

I've just been disappointed in this government in the way they have attacked and approached some of those community groups. In strong support of those groups, I would like to see this government coming forward and giving them the kind of funding that they should get and not cutting back on their funding.

We know the cause itself is not the drunken individual behind the wheel, it is the alcohol itself that's causing it. Can you imagine if we had a society where we are taking alcohol off? One of the biggest distributors of alcohol is the government itself. They own the place. But we would never one day start a debate on whether we should take alcohol out of society. No. It makes too much money, although at a great cost to our society. We have health costs. If you look at the health costs and what alcohol has done, of course, if you look at that and the destruction of families, you would then say, "My golly, what a cost."

With the same energy that we do the attack on cigarettes, maybe we should start focusing and be bold enough as legislators to debate that aspect of it, to wonder whether we should be looking at alcohol as really the enemy, the cause — many people are addicted to it — and then, after the fact, looking at whether we can rectify it, or whether we should have stronger laws, enforce them more rigidly. Will that solve the problem? I don't think it will, but I do think that the direction in which the member for Mississauga South is going is just a limited direction itself. They should start looking at their government and realizing, in support of those community groups, whether to give money there and give it the strong moral support that it needs and stop coming here and talking about "my bill" and "Mike Harris," "my bill." That doesn't help the situation. Let's get some meat into all of this.

Member for Mississauga South, I will be supporting this because it's just a little bit in the right direction, but again, there's a far way to go. Your government should change their attitude towards those community groups. They are very helpful and forceful in bringing a better society for us all to live in.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'm going to be voting for this bill because I think it's a step in the right

direction. I would say to the member from Mississauga — she mentioned earlier on in her comments when starting off that she knows all of us do a good job — she got that first hand when she talked to one of my constituents yesterday on my cell phone. That's right.

Anyway, I'd like to make a couple of comments specifically in regard to the bill, and afterwards I just want to make a general comment. As I said, this is a step in the right direction. We shouldn't try to skate away from that. What the member is attempting to do here is to tighten how we suspend licences for people, especially when they're repeat offenders. As it is now, we have a mechanism that we can suspend a person's driver's licence if the person is convicted of an offence while driving under the influence of alcohol.

1020

The member is attempting to toughen those provisions so that once a person is caught for the first time, there would be an automatic one-year suspension of the driver's licence. If caught a second time, the person would get a three-year suspension, as I understand it. If caught a third time, the person would get a five-year suspension of that licence.

This is a step in the right direction. But for the record, although this will in the end, as the member said, lessen the number of accidents on the road, there is also another part to it: I think it is a little bit tough with regard to subsection 41.1(3), which I'll come back to a little later when I'll speak specifically to that.

There is one part that I think is not a bad idea. Subsection 41.1(6) says, "A person's driver's licence that is suspended under subsection (2)," — which is the first, second and third time — "or revoked under subsection (3) shall not be reinstated until the person successfully completes at the person's own expense,

(a) a prescribed educational program on the topics related to impaired driving."

I think that's a good idea. If we're going to suspend somebody's licence because they have been caught impaired, we shouldn't automatically give it back to them. I think you'd be defeating the purpose. The person gets the licence back, and statistics show there are repeat offenders. To prevent that from happening, we should be trying to curb the person's problem with a little bit of education.

What's lacking in this bill — I'm not necessarily advocating that it be in the bill, but as a matter of policy for the government — part of the problem is that as legislators we're trying to close the doors once the horse has run out of the barn. Although this is a good step, and I don't want the member to take this as a negative comment, this is after the fact, once we've caught the person.

We need to try in a big way to educate people so that they know they shouldn't get in their cars when they've been drinking. Governments prior to the member's — the Davis government, the Peterson government and the Rae government — spent a lot of money making sure there were public ads, that there was public education going on that said, "Don't drink and drive." The industry itself and the hotel and restaurant industry got heavily involved with the designated driver's program, where people were

encouraged to give their keys to somebody who would not be drinking that evening to be assured that the person leaving who would be behind the wheel would not leave in a state of intoxication.

Although this is good, I urge the member from Mississauga South to go to the Premier and cabinet, hope they'll listen and say, "You may be heck-bent on trying to deal with the deficit, but we need to put some money into education and make sure that young people and other people in our society are always reminded that drinking and driving are not a good thing," and that is what we need to concentrate on.

She and I grew up partly in a time when drinking and driving weren't seen as a bad thing. I can relate stories, as the member for Mississauga South can, where we've seen people in our communities, and even at times people in our families, who would drive under the influence of alcohol because it wasn't seen as a bad thing in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.

Because of public education on the part of governments, and the hotel and restaurant industry getting involved, we've very much changed attitudes, when it comes to drinking and driving in this province, and probably across most of Canada, to the point where it is now not socially acceptable to see somebody walking out of a bar under the influence of alcohol and getting behind the wheel of a car.

Most people in the general public will do whatever they can to tackle those persons, if need be, to prevent them from getting behind the wheel of a car. I certainly have, in the past, stopped people from getting behind the wheel of a car after they've been drinking. It goes to show what you can do with public education, the effect you can have, on reducing the incidence of accidents related to drinking and driving.

The bill is good because if people are under the influence and get caught, I think, "Great, the bill goes in the right direction." But first we need to do public education so that people see it as socially unacceptable and take a personal responsibility as citizens, not just the government, not just the police but people in society, and say, "It is not right to be drinking and driving and it's not something that is accepted." The second part is that people around them say, "Hey, I'm not going to allow this to happen."

The other thing I suggest to the member for Mississauga South is that RIDE is a very successful program. The RIDE program, as people across Ontario know it, puts up roadblocks at peak hours, when people are coming out of hotels and going on municipal roads and provincial highways, where they spot-check. That is a really good deterrent. How many times have I gone to a function, as an MPP, where there's alcohol involved and seen people having one, maybe two drinks and that's it. If they have their vehicles they don't even take a chance because (a) they know it's socially not acceptable, but (b) they know darn well that the RIDE program is out there. How many times have I heard somebody say to me, as I'm sure it's been said to the member for Mississauga South: "Boy, I'm not going to drink and drive. I'll probably get caught in the RIDE program".

I think those efforts on the part of the provincial government — and municipal governments, because the RIDE program in other forms is also run by the municipality — need to be beefed up. We need to make sure we have the budgets to operate those because they are a good investment in saving lives, preventing accidents and preventing the problem from happening in the first place.

I encourage the member for Mississauga South and all other members of this assembly to go to the Premier, to the Minister of Transportation, to the Solicitor General and others and say, "Make sure the RIDE program is beefed up, make sure that it's operating the way it needs to and let's make sure our municipal police forces do the same." This bill, although good, deals with this issue after the fact. Do we need to do that? Of course, and I'm not arguing otherwise; I'm just saying we need to do this way ahead of time.

I say to the member for Mississauga South that I and the other members of the New Democratic Party will be voting in favour of your resolution. I would only be remiss if I didn't say for the record that the member for Welland-Thorold has basically the same motion that was to come before this House next week. I don't know how, procedurally, we're going to deal with this in the House. If it's dealt with in one motion under the bill of Margaret Marland, I wonder how we're going to deal with that next week, because both bills were attempting to do the same thing. I think it shows there's broad party support for this. The member for Welland-Thorold from the New Democratic Party is coming next week with the same motion, so we'll see what happens next week, if the bill comes back for a second time in a different version, which bill will get the support.

With that, I'd like to leave whatever time is left on the clock for my friend from Nickel Belt, the dean of the Legislature, who I see has returned and has many things to say about this bill.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): It's a privilege to address this private member's bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to impaired driving offences. For 10 years I went into Burtch Correctional Centre on a monthly basis to talk to inmates locked up for drunk driving. It's my opinion that jail alone is not the answer, hence I'm very supportive of some alternatives presented today, especially those presented by my colleague from Mississauga South.

I wish to pose a question to members of the Legislative Assembly: What if there were no drunk drivers, no alcohol-related car crashes, no motorcycle smack-ups or boating accidents, no snowmobile decapitations from fence wire because the operator was too intoxicated to notice, no resultant injuries, property damage, insurance claims or lawsuits, for example, when a drunk driver puts a victim in a wheelchair for the rest of their life?

We would see fewer premature funerals, less need for police officers, coroners, insurance investigators, judges and lawyers. An Ontario without drunk drivers would be a different world indeed. There would be 47% fewer motor vehicle deaths on our province's highways and back roads. In 1994 alone, 544 people would have lived to see the end of the year. Some 176 pedestrians killed that year would theoretically be with us today if they or

the driver who killed them had not been drinking; half the people killed in snowmobile crashes, motorcycle accidents and ATV crashes would also still be enjoying their sport; and a whopping 88% of the people who drowned or were killed in boating accidents that year would still be alive and would still be contributing members of our society.

It is true that overall in the past 10 years the number of incidents involving drunk driving has decreased by 44%. This has occurred for a number of reasons: Public education campaigns through such groups as Citizens Against Impaired Driving, the Brantford Drinking and Driving Countermeasures Committee down my way, dual enforcement and education programs such as RIDE, mentioned earlier, have brought us a long way.

This, unfortunately, does not eliminate the problem. Every 45 minutes in Ontario, a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash. Impaired driving is the number one killer of young people aged 15 to 24.

1030

I support Bill 85 and I thank MPP Marland for setting the stage to address this issue: the number one cause of criminal death and injury in Ontario. I also know that Minister of Transportation Al Palladini has already asked his ministry staff to look at these proposals. We truly want to determine the best way for government to get tougher with impaired drivers.

In 1994, 25,520 drivers in Ontario were charged with impaired driving. Of these driving offenders, 65% were released for second, third and subsequent offences; hence the importance of this proposed legislation to crack down on repeat offenders. As explained, the bill calls for a driver's licence suspension for at least one year for the first offence; three years in the case of a second conviction; five years in the case of a third conviction; and on the fourth conviction the individual's driving privileges are revoked permanently. The message is clear: We want drinking drivers off our roads immediately and we don't want to make it easy for them to come back, possibly giving them the opportunity to injure or kill someone else in the meantime, as we have heard today.

Repeat offenders are the untouched problem in Ontario. Through measures set out in Bill 85, enforcement will be coupled with education, or alcohol and drug rehabilitation if needed. Research shows that alcohol abuse treatment helps to reduce repeat violations. Seven provinces already have education or treatment programs in place for those convicted of impaired driving.

The Addiction Research Foundation, where I worked for 20 years, examined the potential impact of introducing mandatory remedial programs for convicted drinking drivers in Ontario. Their findings: Rehabilitation reduced all-cause mortality by 30%. Therefore, considering that 544 people died in alcohol-related crashes in 1994, the ARF estimates that 77 deaths will be prevented. This figure does not include injuries and does not include non-driver deaths that would also have been prevented.

I believe MPP Marland's legislation has very broad support. Her previous work has now been adopted by our government in the form of the administrative driver's licence suspension. Adopted in 40 US states, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, the 90-day administrative driver's

licence suspension has proven to reduce alcohol-related crashes, deaths and injuries by up to 50%. It is a strong deterrent to get drunk drivers off our roads.

The Addiction Research Foundation also has an evaluation of this program. The results: For example, it shows a 4.6% reduction in drivers involved in fatal crashes. Therefore, going back to the 1994 figure of 544 people killed and factoring in this 4.6% reduction, we can see that some 25 driver fatalities alone would have been prevented. I consider this factoring conservative and I reiterate that this does not include reductions in injuries and non-driver fatalities.

The regulatory control of the misuse and abuse of alcohol has been increasing under this current government. Here in Ontario the Ministry of Transportation is leading a working group to develop several options. This group includes representatives from the Addiction Research Foundation, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services.

As many would know, Ontario has extended bar hours to 2 am. Until now, Ontario had the earliest last call in Canada and its bordering US states. Some people were drinking past 1 or 2 am in after-hours clubs or were driving across the border. Car crashes occurred as people travelled to take advantage of more liberal hours in other jurisdictions. Changing bar hours by one hour reduces the number of drinkers who cross the border to neighbouring jurisdictions such as Quebec or New York.

The prohibition of alcohol for 10 days up to and including the May 24 weekend has been established over the years in provincial parks. This ban goes back to about 1978. Since that time parks have been periodically added or removed from the list in response to whether or not there is a problem.

We are committed to working with the private sector for awareness programs; the RIDE program has been mentioned.

I personally have worked to try and decrease drinking and driving for over 20 years now and I'm heartened by an Ontario government that remains very serious and uncompromising in its position on drinking and driving, a position of zero tolerance. This position and the private member's bill today will bring us one step closer to a world without drunk drivers.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to join my colleague the member for Scarborough North in supporting the bill standing in the name of Ms Marland. These are tough measures, but it's clear, and all previous speakers have indicated, that the community is increasingly concerned, particularly about repeat offenders. The member for Mississauga South, the sponsor of the bill, has quite eloquently spoken to the statistical data which suggest that in the last seven to eight years the number of licence suspensions for repeat offenders has increased from 50% to 65%.

There is no doubt that there is community concern. All members hear it and feel it; all of us. Speaking for myself, I have a certain conflict of interest here. I live on the roads of Ontario; I have for over 20 years. My principal residence has four tires and it sits out in the Queen's Park parking lot, and I don't laugh when I say

that. If you drive 100,000 kilometres a year, you've got to be interested in Mrs Marland's bill.

Laughter.

Mr Conway: Well, I am deadly serious. I heard the member for Norfolk. He makes some very good arguments. This is a conflict for me. I don't take public transit. I live in rural eastern Ontario. I drive to the provincial capital every week. I drive upwards of 100,000 kilometres a year, and when I hear Mrs Marland and others tell me about what's going on on the highways of Ontario I am particularly concerned.

Like all members, I have had friends and relatives who have been killed or seriously maimed by this horror to which bill 85 speaks. I live on the Ontario-Quebec border, as does my colleague the member for Lanark-Renfrew, who is here today. He, like I, will know that one of the real problems we have — the member for Nepean is here; I heard him very eloquently speaking to this issue on CBC Radio in Ottawa a couple of months ago. If you live in the national capital area, if you live in Pembroke, if you live in Renfrew, this is an issue for, among other reasons, the differential activity between Ontario and Quebec, the differential regulations.

The previous speaker talked about different closing hours. There have been countless tragedies in and around that interprovincial bridge at Pembroke. I'll never forget the night a couple of years ago that four or five young people were killed in a horrific accident — I think the average age of those kids was in the early twenties — in one horrific fatality that, as I recall, involved alcohol.

None of us can be indifferent to the issues raised by Mrs Marland in her bill. These are tough measures. I support the measures. I'm sure the courts will have something to say about some of these at some point, but that's not for me to decide.

There are some attendant issues for me. Enforcement is clearly an issue. The intentions here are very good. I think everyone expects this bill to carry unanimously because of the issues we've all recognized, but as legislators we've got to go beyond just good intentions and good principles. Good public policy is about reasonable enforcement.

When I think about what I experience these days on the highways and byways of Ontario, I'm not at all sure that we have or will have the kind of enforcement that is going to be necessary, particularly in rural and northern Ontario, to make these good intentions stick. I hope I'm wrong. My impression, for example, is that the RIDE program — and for this I give Roy McMurtry and others great credit. I watched that RIDE program evolve over the years, and there was no doubt in my mind that there came a point some time in the early to mid-1980s when it really cranked up the resources and changed the public perception about your chance of getting caught. When people understood that their chance of getting caught was much greater, behaviours changed. When people think their chance of getting caught is dropping, I suspect the behaviours are changing the other way.

My friend the member for Nickel Belt is going to speak shortly. He and I were chatting just a moment ago about the particular problems in places like rural and northern Ontario. There's no such thing as Mississauga

Transit where I come from; there is virtually no public transit. Most people I represent travel by car or half-ton truck 30, 40, 50, 70, 80, 100 kilometres a day to work. So we have to think, it seems to me, what are we saying to people? And I'm not excusing the bad behaviour that will get them caught in the net of Bill 85, but people, being people, will perhaps consider means and activities that we don't like because the economic imperatives of their lives require that they get to work. So there being no public transit in rural Renfrew or in Nickel Belt — there being no OC Transpo, there being no TCC — we've got to be careful that this policy does not effectively impact differentially on citizens across the province. I don't know how you solve that problem, and it is a real problem.

1040

I was saying to my friend Floyd Laughren a moment ago that one of the other issues about enforcement, as far as I'm concerned, has to do — and I don't know how to put this felicitously, but over the years, in my part of eastern Ontario and western Quebec and in a couple of university towns with which I'm quite familiar, I've seen some absolutely outrageous tavernkeepers. Most are good. Most of the licensed establishments are quite good, but boy, there have been some pretty bad actors over a long period of time. You sit there and say to yourself: "What would they have to do? How much death and carnage and illegality would that establishment have to engage in before the Ontario or the Quebec liquor licence commissions would actually revoke the licence?"

I think one of the real issues in enforcement might be that if the liquor licence commissions of the various and several provinces, including Ontario, went after some of the really bad actors, the egregious misconducts, and said, "We're going to take your liquor licence away and you're never getting one back, ever" — because there's more to this than just repeat offenders in terms of drinking and driving. My friend from Lanark may want to comment on this, but there are issues of responsibility that attach not just to drivers; I think that's where the principal responsibility clearly does attach.

Really, it is a draconian measure, but quite frankly, after three or four convictions, yes, I think the member from Mississauga is absolutely right. It is a right, it is a responsibility — it's a privilege, I guess was the word you used — it is a privilege and it's not a guaranteed right. I have no difficulty at all; if somebody has been convicted three or four times of drunk driving, then take their bloody licence and never give it back. I'm sure there's some judge who's going to tell me I can't do that, but that's a very serious offence in my view. But it is equally serious that some tavernkeeper consistently breaks the law and encourages the very conduct that we're trying to change.

A couple of quick and final observations. I like the idea that after each suspension there be a mandatory driver education program or drug and alcohol rehab program. Again, my question there is — I don't want to be partisan lest I offend the now departed member from Caledon, but quite frankly the driver education offices in my part of eastern Ontario are currently just a mess. I presume that's all going to get fixed up, but we can't

impose any more burdens on those people at the present time because they can't discharge the responsibilities that they've now got. It's a good idea, but the current infrastructure, particularly in small-town eastern Ontario, I can tell you, the MTO offices simply cannot maintain their current responsibilities and there's no point in thinking about giving them any more work because it simply won't happen. There may be a way around that, it may be something we want to give to community-based organizations or whatever, but it's simply not realistic to imagine that they're going to discharge that responsibility, though it is a very good idea and I commend the member for it.

I guess a final observation is, I was listening to a legal affairs reporter the other night on CBS News talking about the "three strikes and you're out" initiative in the US. You will recall a couple of years ago the Clinton administration, together with Congress, really got together on what seemed to be a bipartisan initiative to deal with some repeat offenders, and boy, it was good politics: three strikes and you're out. Well, a couple of years after that bipartisan initiative was enacted, it's basically irrelevant. They were using California as the example. It doesn't matter two hoots apparently, particularly in the courts of California. So again, good intentions, good principles and good public policy, and surely it means that we've got to implement in some reasonable way.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I am pleased to stand and support the member for Mississauga South in this initiative. I know this is not a Margaret-come-lately initiative on her behalf and that this is something she's had an interest in for some time, and I commend her for that.

I don't think anyone has said anything in debate so far that I can disagree with, which is very unusual in this assembly. When you read through the explanatory note, it does explain it very thoroughly and I think strikes the right balance on penalizing. I commend her for finding that balance, because I think we can get a bit foolish sometimes in our exuberance to straighten out a problem. I think the member for Mississauga South has found a balance here.

I am a bit like the member for Renfrew North, because I drive 60,000 to 70,000 kilometres a year because my constituency runs almost 400 miles north and south and almost 100 miles east and west, and you must drive to those places. There are communities interspersed throughout the riding so I can't just fly to one, and so I drive. So I too have a vested interest in this.

But also I can recall as a youth upsetting a car, turning over a car, a very serious accident, the details of which I can only leave to your imagination, other than to say that it's one reason I'm speaking on this bill today. I'm not alone in that regard, I'm sure. How many of us are pure when it comes to the issue of drinking and driving? We do need to toughen up our laws.

I am concerned about the whole issue of prevention versus cure. It's a bit trite to say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but I think in this case it's true, that if we could find some way — and I'm not pointing fingers here — of preventing drinking and driving as opposed to dealing with it after the fact —

now, dealing with it after the fact also is preventive in nature, I understand that, and it's one reason I'm supporting this bill.

I do hope that in this era of fiscal restraint we try to strike a balance on how much money we put into programs such as the RIDE program. That is a good program. We need more promotion in the schools for the designated driver philosophy. I think there's a lot of work to be done with the tavern owners of this world. There's still a lot to be done there. I hope it wouldn't have to be done just through the courts. That's a messy way of doing it and punitive, and perhaps there are better ways of educating our tavernkeepers as well, although the ultimate responsibility lies with the person who gets behind that wheel, and I think we all agree with that.

If there is any one of us who does not know a family that's had tragedy strike because of drinking and driving, I'd be surprised. It may not be in our immediate family, but I would suspect that we all know someone.

I want to leave some time for my colleague the member for London Centre. I simply reiterate that I commend the member for Mississauga South for bringing this bill forward, and she will be receiving our support.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 85 and compliment the member for Mississauga South for her effort and dedication on this important issue. As the member for Nickel Belt pointed out, this is no last-minute effort by the member for Mississauga South. This bill is a product of her long-standing commitment to this very serious issue in the province of Ontario.

Drunk driving causes deep concern for people in my constituency of Nepean. A number of tragedies in my area have had people in our community very concerned in recent months and over the last year and a half. I think all members have seen the number of petitions that I have presented to the Legislature over the last year on this issue on behalf of constituents. We had a very successful town hall meeting where we had more than 250 people come out to hear the member for Mississauga South, among others, deal with the issue of impaired driving. In Ottawa-Carleton, we're very privileged to have a new MADD chapter, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. In Nepean we have a Nepean Committee Against Impaired Driving and we have work by the Ontario Community Council Against Impaired Driving in my constituency. I think that amount of community support is a recognition of the importance that people in my community place on this very, very difficult issue.

1050

I should say at the outset that I'm pleased to note that we have a very non-partisan debate on this issue, and I commend my colleagues the member for Norfolk, Nickel Belt and Renfrew North for that, because I think this issue is too important to involve partisan politics.

The scope of this problem is very serious. Drunk driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in this country. The member for Mississauga South spoke about more than 500 deaths in the province of Ontario each year. If that were two or three airline disasters, this would be an absolute outrage. There would be royal commissions going on on this issue. But the 500 deaths

in Ontario do not speak to the problem, because for every death there are countless injuries and for every person involved in an accident there's their family and the community which also suffer. Every 45 minutes a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash. It's not a victimless crime. It's a tragedy for families and communities, and these victims have a face.

There was a tragedy in my constituency involving the daughter and grandson of Senator Marjory LeBreton. Marjory wrote me a letter, part of which I'd like to read, with her permission, into the record.

"There is a serious problem of drunk driving in Ontario and too many innocent people have been injured or killed.

"To that list are added the names of my cherished daughter Linda LeBreton and my wonderful and loving grandson Brian LeBreton Holmes.

"I want you to know that you, Margaret and the others, such as MADD, who are joining together to combat this horrendous problem are to be highly commended. I intend to fully and actively participate in all efforts to change and strengthen our laws. I believe that people who have little or no respect for the law and callously disregard the lives of innocent citizens should be subjected to laws that do everything possible to remove their potential to wreak havoc on innocent victims and, by direct extension, the family and friends of the victims."

That's just one face of a victim in the province of Ontario. We look at the tragedy for this family and so many other families.

There's clearly a need for tougher action in the federal Parliament, and I don't think this is a partisan issue. But having said that, hopefully the passage of this bill could send a message to the federal Parliament, to all parties there, that there is a real and sincere need for them to take tougher actions on this issue. Obviously we cannot amend the Criminal Code in this place, which is a substantive answer to some of the problems.

I believe there's an obscenity of repeat offenders and the lackadaisical attitude taken from them. Even the best of us makes mistakes, but the question is, do we learn from them? Regrettably, too often people in Ontario don't. Some will argue the measures in this bill are tough. Certainly I can put on the record that I would like to see this bill go much further, as would people in my constituency. I say, if we're not getting tough after the second offence, then when? Regrettably, there are far too many repeat offenders, as the member for Mississauga South spoke of: 65% of charges are for repeat offenders. Educational programs have been very successful, but as the member for Renfrew North pointed out, there is a strong need for an active deterrent, for people to fear going out and getting caught, and a need to target the small group causing the problem.

Some say perhaps these are anecdotal. They're not anecdotal. How about Claude Pilon, who was jailed for two years after his 15th offence? That's an obscenity. How about Jean Marc Droulin, jailed for two years for his 10th conviction? Had his licence suspended for three years. That's the maximum today. An obscenity. What about Victor Legros, sentenced to 2.5 years for his 11th offence? There's one case we read about in the Ottawa

Citizen in the last six months where it was a 28th offence. This bill can't address the Criminal Code issue, and we hope our federal counterparts in the federal Parliament could seek to toughen their measures to deal with repeat offenders.

Educational programs have been successful with the general public. I think we've got to target, though, the repeat offenders. There specifically is where the problem is.

Mrs Marland's bill specifies that the criminal pays, which I think is important. It gets tough on second and third offences and puts a "fourth strike and you're out" provision. This is a criminal problem, not a social problem any more. This bill places its emphasis on getting tough with the criminals. It moves solidly forward in the right direction. Combined with administrative licence suspension brought forward earlier by the Attorney General last spring, it goes a long way to addressing this problem.

The administrative licence suspension was originally part of Mrs Marland's bill but she withdrew it when the government undertook it as a government measure. It has been enacted and I think will be introduced in the next little while, which is good news for those of us wanting to fight this issue. ALS will ensure suspended drunk drivers do not get back behind the wheel until charges against them have been settled in court. The suspensions will be made by the registrar of motor vehicles at the request of local police. ALS is efficient, fast and inexpensive, and that will be another weapon in our arsenal to fight drunk driving. To ensure the system is fair and free of abuse, suspected drunk drivers can appeal their temporary suspensions. In most cases this will be a solid response to this issue.

I believe it's important that this House send a strong message from all three political parties that we're going to get tough with drunk drivers. I've been particularly pleased that the debate has been non-partisan in that regard. We can send that message.

This bill not only merits support today, but I believe merits speedy passage through a committee of this Legislature and through third reading.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak briefly today in favour of the member for Mississauga South's Bill 85. She has, as others have said, been most persistent in trying to get some of these measures put into law, and she is to be congratulated on that.

When she brought forward her bill a couple of years ago, we were unable to support it in the form that it was in. Those who were in this Legislature will know there was quite a discussion about some of the legal problems that were in her original bill. I'm very pleased to see that those issues have been resolved in this bill. The possibility of appeal is there. That was one of the legal impediments to the removal of someone's licence after however many offenses there would be. It was felt that unless there was some faint hope, if you like, what we would see is people driving without a licence, and that continues to be a bit of a worry. We will hear people criticize this bill because of it.

It is true that there are some people who are so wedded to their cars that they make an assumption about

driving as being a right rather than a privilege. Part of what we need to do as we teach people to drive, as we talk about driving, is to use that language: It is a privilege for us to be able to drive vehicles that have the capacity not only to transport us rapidly from one area to another, but if they are driven recklessly to kill large numbers of people. We license people and we make decisions about whether people are fit to drive or not. That is a privilege rather than a right, and we need to be emphasizing that.

I say to the member for Mississauga South that she has been one of the most outspoken advocates of stronger measures against drinkers and drivers and she deserves to be the one who brings forward a bill that makes this massive change in terms of attitude towards this. I certainly will be supporting her efforts to get this quickly through committee and to be made law, because I think it is very important.

I will say that the administrative licence suspension is not yet in effect. I understand the Solicitor General is making an announcement that it will be in effect by Christmas. The faster it comes into effect the better, because that is probably, with all the studies that have been done, the most effective way to interrupt the driving pattern immediately for someone who has been convicted, to put that lack of privilege into the picture very quickly.

We will be supporting this bill, and I offer on behalf of my colleagues who didn't have an opportunity to speak congratulations to the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Mississauga South has two minutes.

Mrs Marland: I'm deeply appreciative and deeply humbled by the support of all three parties this morning, particularly to have the support of the two deans of this place, the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Renfrew North. I also very much appreciate the comments from the former Attorney General, the member for London Centre.

Very quickly, I want to emphasize that the bill does address the cost factor for rehabilitation programs. It is my intent that the rehabilitation programs, where they are mandatory for that repeat offender and for the first-time offender who may be a candidate to drive drunk again, would be at the expense of the driver, the person who has violated the law.

Yes, I agree with the member for Cochrane South that educational advertising is still necessary. It has been responsible for a great reduction and it is to get to the source of the problem, which will ultimately eradicate the problem. At the moment, my bill is only one step.

I want to say that I sincerely understand the argument about the additional problems for people in rural ridings. I don't drive 100,000 kilometres a year — I don't think I could even do that, I say to the member for Renfrew North — but I can appreciate what that kind of involvement is for people who have to commute in their vehicles. But I want them to be safe, and I want drunk drivers everywhere to know that wherever they drive, it is absolutely unacceptable.

In this debate we focus on the deaths, but we also must remember all the people whose lives are changed perma-

nently, people who now live their lives in wheelchairs, in a great deal of pain, who have contacted me and said, "I didn't die; I wish I had." Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to represent all of those people in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for the first ballot item has expired.

1100

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr Gerretsen moved private member's notice of motion number 28:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should develop a formal process to monitor the progress and development of Ontario's children and youth; and in order to protect children and youth and to ensure that government policies are in fact improving the progress and development of children and youth, the government should formally develop and implement a progress report on children and youth that monitors the following categories of indicators:

Environmental indicators which will identify the ideal environmental elements for the optimal development of children and will include economic security, family structure, physical environment, community resources and civic vitality;

Progression indicators which refer to the general concepts or measures over time and will provide benchmarks of development and will include health status, social relationships/involvement, academic performance and skill development; and

That the government, through a designated ministry, should be required to present to this House annually the findings of this report card as well as an "action plan" to address those areas needing improvement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My resolution today calls for the government to develop a formal process to monitor the progress and development of Ontario's children and youth. This will complement the excellent review of the health of Canadian children by the Canadian Institute of Child Health released every five years and the work by Coalition 2000 focusing on the incidence and impact of poverty on Canadian children and families.

Many of you may know that several other jurisdictions have implemented such a process, perhaps the best known being the state of Oregon's benchmarks, and that the Canadian Council on Social Development is currently developing a report card at the national level that will be completed and released annually.

In Ontario, the Premier's Council on Health, Well-being and Social Justice in 1994 recommended that the provincial government develop its own report card to track the progress of children and youth. This recommendation has yet to be acted upon. Why would this process be useful?

First, it would be useful to educate the public about the wellbeing of our children and youth. Second, information collected from this annual process will help us in our role

as legislators advance policies and practices that will support Ontario's families and communities and help them to raise healthy and happy children.

This is very important right now, especially since the Legislature is considering significant changes in how the public sector fulfils its role. We must protect children and youth's wellbeing first and foremost and ensure that every child has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. After all, our future economic and social security depends on how well today's children grow into tomorrow's productive, responsible adults.

We know systems and attitudes towards helping children and youth simply must change, as the social and economic environment in which our children and youth live has changed. Consider a few of the trends that demand a rethinking of how we approach raising healthy children and youth: the changing structure of families; the changing of our social climate; the different roles that women play in our society; the perception of increased violence; the economic restructuring; and of course the government restructuring that's currently taking place.

A report card process can help us adapt our strategies for helping children and youth. How does this process work? Recognizing the complexity of child and youth development, the progress report would monitor the following categories of indicators.

Environmental indicators, which will identify the ideal environmental elements for the optimal development of children and will include:

Economic security: the assured standard of living that provides families with a level of resources and benefits necessary to participate economically, politically, socially, culturally and with dignity in their community's activities.

Family structure: the characteristics and structure of the family and dynamics of family functioning.

Physical environment: in terms of natural and built environments and threats to safety.

Community resources: resources available to children and families in their local communities, including education and training, housing, health, child and family supports, and leisure and culture.

Civic vitality: the strength of social affiliation within a community, region, province and country.

Secondly, there would be progression indicators, which refer to the general concepts or measures over time and will provide benchmarks of development and will include health status, which refers to the state of physical, mental and social wellbeing; social relationships and involvement — the strength of individual relationships or involvements with other family members, peers, community members and local institutions; and academic performance and skills development, which would include individual and group achievement in areas of formal learning and non-academic skills.

Much of this information is already collected by various levels of government. However, by making one ministry responsible for its collection and dissemination, these data would be more readily accessible and useful.

Since the Second World War economists and governments have collected a wide range of statistical information about the economy. When government wants to

know about unemployment, we look at the unemployment rate. When we want to know about inflation, we look at various rates that are available to us. When government wants to know about population, we look at the population growth rates. But when we want to know about the state of our children, the government is unable to present any clear picture. Children cannot vote and are not represented in the legislatures. We must ensure that some mechanism is in place that will make governments accountable for the progress that our children are making in our society.

All parties in government in recent years have recognized the need to support and promote the wellbeing of children and youth, whether it was the Davis government when it introduced the Child and Family Services Act, the Liberal government and its report *Children First*, or the work done by the Premier's Council during the NDP term of office. This is an opportunity for the present government to continue this tradition and to show its commitment to improving the lives of Ontario's youth and children. I think it fits in well with their concern to see tax dollars spent wisely and effectively as it would monitor programs and services to demonstrate their effectiveness.

This government has stated its intentions to identify its core businesses and key programs using a business plan approach. I urge the government to make the wellbeing of our children a core business, fiscally and ideologically. The social and economic health of our society rests with our children. It's common sense to make them a priority.

1110

I hope I can count on the support of the members in this assembly for my resolution and my private member's bill. I will be introducing a private member's bill and I will just read how I feel section 5 of the Child and Family Services Act should be amended, and of course this private member's bill will be introduced later on. It would include a new subsection (6), which would read as follows:

"(6) In each year, beginning with the year in which this subsection comes into force, all service providers who provide a service to children in the year will make a report to the minister so designated no later than March 31 of the following year with respect to those children relating to the following categories:

"(a) their standard of living;

"(b) the structure and safety of the environment in which they live;

"(c) the community support services available to them in the community in which they live;

"(d) the number and type of social institutions and organizations that are active in the community in which the children live; and

"(e) all other matters relating to the services that they receive as the minister specifies."

Subsection (7) would be added that would state:

"(7) The minister shall prepare a summary of the reports received under subsection (6) and lay the summary before the assembly, if it is in session, and if not, at the next session."

Making Ontario a better place for children will not be accomplished through government policies and programs

alone. Families, civic and religious organizations, businesses and local communities all have important responsibilities and roles in the lives of children. But we can make a tremendous difference for children through a government that considers children foremost and invests wisely in their future.

Especially in this time, as the Legislature considers significant changes in how the public sector fulfils its role, we must protect children's and youth's wellbeing first and foremost and ensure that every child has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. After all, our economic and social security depends on how well today's children grow into tomorrow's productive, responsible adults.

I would be more than pleased to hear from the other members of the assembly how they feel about this resolution and the private member's bill that will follow, but I feel it's absolutely imperative that we make as a Legislature a statement that no matter what government actions are involved, the children of this province will continue to count first and foremost in the activities that we're involved in in this Legislature.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I rise in support of the member for Kingston and The Islands and commend him for bringing this forward. I also wish him well in his contest for the leadership of his party. I believe he brings a substantial commitment and presence to that contest and I wish him well, without taking sides, of course.

I recall the Premier's Council on Health had a children's committee, I believe it was called, and I believe that's the source of his inspiration for bringing this resolution forward and leading to the private member's bill which the member is going to be bringing forward.

It's particularly appropriate at this time, when government is effecting cuts — and I don't think many members would disagree with this — in the welfare rates, that's already been done, that affects children; health care cuts, that's going to affect children; educational cuts, that's going to affect children; housing cuts, that's going to affect children. All of these cuts that are taking place by the government are going to have an impact on our children and it's terribly important that at this time we develop some kind of indices that will help us measure the progress of our children.

While some people would applaud those cuts I've mentioned, no one out there will applaud if it means that it has a severe impact on the children of this province. You will not get support for that. I hope the members of the government side in particular — I don't think the opposition will have any problem at all supporting this resolution from the member for Kingston and The Islands, but governments tend to get so defensive on matters like this that I sometimes am nervous as to whether or not they'll support something that's so obviously of such common sense. We'll see what happens as this debate evolves. I simply encourage members of the government not to be defensive; simply look at the wording in this notice of motion and see if there's anything in there that you can really disagree with, given how much is at stake for the children of this province.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): I rise today to speak to the honourable member for Kingston and The Islands, one of the most beautiful ridings in Ontario, as he tells me every time he gets the opportunity. I am certainly not going to speak against this motion, but rather speak to it.

Interjection.

Mr Preston: If that's not sitting on the fence, I don't know what is, but you're going to understand why I'm sitting on the fence before I'm finished. I don't have any trouble with "the ideal environmental elements for the optimal development of children." I hope you forgive me if I refer to that as the optimum situation. It's a little bit of a tongue twister for me. Certainly, nobody can disagree with this. The optimum situation for me to come to work is by the Queen E with no traffic, but we all know that's not realistic. Some of the elements in the optimum situation are just not possible to reach. It's a wonderful idea. I love to shoot for the stars and hit the moon. That's not a bad situation either.

Mr Gerretsen, by way of his resolution, would ask us to set up more bureaucracy that really is going to point out what this government is already doing. I believe there are three things that should go on a list for the optimum situation where children or youth are concerned: good food, good education and caring parents — or caring family, let's say it that way. This cannot be achieved unless the providers in that family have a job. All of the elements add up to: have a job. This government is doing more to promote that than any government in the past 15 years.

The intent of the resolution on the surface is great, but the realities are somewhat different. The resolution asks that this government form a progress-establishing committee to find out how far children have come, how far they need to be. I believe those situations are already in place, in my experience. He talks about his provision for the new amendment that lays out that caregivers will have to lay out the situation the child is living in, the community situation, the availability of services to this child. In my situation, that's done once a year already. Every time one of these caregivers is licensed, the exact situation that you have gone through is done. I know that from personal experience.

Children are a priority of this government. I thought I heard that children were not represented in this House. I would like to correct that. I've been involved in youth work for the past 30 years and I am certainly interested in youth and certainly interested in representing them in this House. I am particularly interested in those children that, for a variety of reasons, need specialized care. I've been involved with youth with specialized needs. They are called "hard to service." As a matter of fact, if they have nowhere else to go, if they've been refused by everybody else, they end up at the ranch.

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One of the priorities for these children is to get them to relate to animals, and then they follow by relating to people. The biggest problem with the disfranchised or disoriented youth of today is a lack of ability to relate to people. That comes from a lack of respect for self. Respect for self is learned in the home. They can't learn

respect from their family caregivers unless those caregivers have respect. Those caregivers cannot have respect for self unless they have a job. The whole thing comes back to provision of jobs. The caregivers must have respect for self. They must have meaningful employment. This government is working towards that.

Recently, in a quote to the Ottawa Citizen, Archbishop Marcel Gervais and Bishop François Thibodeau said, "To think that almost one Canadian child in five lives in poverty in one of the richest societies in the world is nothing less than a damning indictment of the present socioeconomic order."

I believe what they say is true. We must remember that the socioeconomic order we have today did not come overnight. It's been going on, growing, feeding on itself for the past 10 or 15 years. I put the 15 years in there because everybody doesn't do everything right, and everybody doesn't do everything wrong. The clock's right twice a day, even if it's not working.

I agree with some of the things the honourable member is trying to do. I don't believe he's going about it in the proper way. I think we can be much less bureaucratic and, as Thoreau said, "Simplify, simplify."

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'm pleased to rise in support of the resolution of my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands. I'm pleased that my colleague is putting children first in this Legislature. I'm pleased that my colleague is saying that he wants us, as a society, to care enough about our children that we're prepared to look honestly at how we're treating them and how they're doing. I believe that this examination of us, of our society, of our success or indeed of our failure in ensuring that we are providing the support for the healthy development of our children, is needed now more than it has ever been needed before.

The kind of report card indicators that my colleague is calling for have been called for for some time, and they've been called for because there have been real concerns about how well our children are doing in the past. I'm not going to take the time to go over all of the indicators of concern that we've seen before but just a couple: 1987 to 1993, when referrals to children's aid societies increased by over 250%; 1991 to 1994, when referrals to children's mental health programs increased by 90% and there were long waiting lists for treatment; in 1990 there were 270,000 children dependent on welfare; and in 1995 there were more than 500,000 children on social assistance.

None of those indicators would make any of us feel good about how we are providing support for our children. There are some areas in which we have absolutely no indicators at all, areas like the sexual abuse of children, where we keep no central statistics, maybe because we don't want to see the full reality, we don't want to take account of it all because it might force us into action.

My concern as we approach this resolution today is:

Where would children be found now on any of the indicators that we would want to look at to see if indeed we are supporting their healthy development? Where would the children be today who are on social assistance and whose families have had a 23% cut in the budget

they need to provide food and clothing for those children?

Where would we rate ourselves on a scale of feeding our children properly when we see more and more families dependent on food banks to put food on the table for their children?

Where would we rate ourselves in our ability to provide decent housing, basic shelter, for our children, when so many families are in substandard housing or in motel rooms because there's no affordable housing being built any longer because government no longer sees that as part of its responsibility?

Where would we rank ourselves in nurturing children through early education when the so-called child care reforms are going to leave us with less quality as well as with less access to child care, or when 27 boards across this province have already cancelled junior kindergarten programs because of government cutbacks?

Where would we rate ourselves in our ability to meet children's special needs when we see education cuts forcing the cutbacks in special education support programs or indeed the elimination of many programs? Where would we rate ourselves in providing support for families caring for special needs children when the special services at home budget is stretched so far that no family can get even the basic level of support they need to cope, and cope well, with their children?

Where would we be in ensuring that our children are at least literate, as cuts to libraries are forcing families to face the possibility of fees to read? It won't hurt my grandson because I've already bought his books for Christmas. But what happens to the children of families who can't afford the library fee, let alone the books?

What happens to our ability even to protect our children as budgets of child protection agencies and children's mental health agencies and family counselling agencies are cut again and yet again?

I don't think we would fare very well on any of these measures today and I don't think our children are going to fare very well in the future if we don't stop hurting them today. The government says it is acting for our children's future. I say that they are not. They are hurting our children now, and the fact that they are hurting our children now will make their future absolutely impossible.

This resolution calls on the government to face this issue with some honesty, to at least seek some objective way of measuring and assessing what is happening and reporting it so that we can all understand what is happening to children. It doesn't force anything else, just an honest examination of how we treat our children.

I suspect it will not have the government's support. If they do, it will be out of some sense of shame or the politics of not being opposed to it. But I don't think the government will act on it because it doesn't want anything to interfere with its agenda. An honest examination of what we are doing to our children, of how our children are doing, might open the eyes of this government. They might be forced to act. That would get in the way of the agenda, and that is the real message, I suggest, from the member for Quinte. What my colleague is calling for probably will not happen, but it should.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): The honourable member for Kingston and The Islands is presenting a resolution that suggests that the government of Ontario should develop a formal process to monitor the services the government provides for children and youth. The member is specifically recommending a progress report that would provide specific categories that would identify environmental indicators and developmental benchmarks. According to the resolution, as it is stated, the rationale for such a report card would be to ensure that the Ontario government provides appropriate policies.

Certainly no one in this House could possibly be against helping the children and youth of our great province. I am personally very concerned about children and youth issues, as my wife and I have four children. However, agreeing to a resolution that only promotes more government bureaucracy I believe would not help children and youth at all. The opposite would be the case. In fact, the Ontario government, both now and historically is doing an excellent job of providing policies and programs that both directly and indirectly affect all of our children and youth and in providing accountability.

Children and youth are part of a family unit, whether traditional or non-traditional. Therefore, if the family unit is caught in a cycle of poverty new ways of dealing with that cycle need to be looked at.

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When we talk about setting up environmental indicators or benchmarks for development with respect to health status, family structure, physical environment and civic vitality, we're talking about personal life choices by parents, choices that are not measurable by government policy.

There is an assumption in this resolution that Ontario is not doing enough for the children and youth of our great province. That simply is not the case. In financial terms, Ontario has the second-highest minimum wage in Canada, second only to BC. Our social assistance rates for families with children are higher than the average rates for the other nine provinces.

But without a doubt, simply giving more money to parents and agencies will not stop the cycle of poverty. If that were true, we would not have poverty at all. Moreover, the notion of simply recording the progress of Ontario's children and youth will not help them in the short term or long term either.

The best measure to improve economic security, health and development is to break that cycle of poverty. The best measure to protect the children and youth of this province is to make sure that their parents have jobs. The best measure to make sure that parents have jobs is to create a climate that encourages investment and economic growth, real jobs, not simply jobs financed out of government spending initiatives.

Implicit in the honourable member's resolution is that somehow we need new indicators to measure whether or not the government policies are translating into helping children and youth. The Ontario government already has accountability built into every level and it has historically had those assurances, the checks and balances that make sure our service agreements and transfer payment agencies are delivering services to our children and

youth. However, it's worth repeating some of those checks and balances.

For example, there are the provincial audits. The primary responsibility of the Office of the Provincial Auditor is to audit all of the government's programs and activities. In fact, the Provincial Auditor concluded in the 1987 report, at the time the member's party was in government, that:

"In general, the path to improved accountability was seen to lie in the establishment of a committee (or committees) with stable membership who could develop expertise in financial issues...to take an in-depth look into government financial plans."

A new standing committee resulted from that recommendation, namely, finance and economic affairs. Moreover, the annual report put out by the Provincial Auditor is referred to the standing committee on public accounts under standing orders of the Legislative Assembly where certain sections receive in-depth examination. Therefore, another area of accountability is the standing committees. Once the Provincial Auditor refers his or her report to the committee on public accounts, further auditing is carried out on specific topics, such as the effectiveness of the programs in achieving their stated objectives. As such, an all-party committee can check out whether or not programs and services for Ontario's children and youth are reliable and appropriate.

There are also internal audits. There are some 40 directives currently enforced under the jurisdiction of Management Board. Those directives are also subject to audit and outline very specific administration of principles, requirements and responsibilities.

So, again, there are accountability mechanisms in place to monitor the success of programs for Ontario's children and youth.

Furthermore, there is transfer payment accountability. The directive for this form of checks and balances was issued in 1988, also when the Liberals were in government. That directive established principles to ensure that each ministry had an effective framework for transfer payment recipients to account for their management of public funds. Transfer agencies that enter into service agreements must report in a timely manner whether or not they achieve their program objectives and what type of corrective action, if any, is required. Agencies must also show proper authorization for all moneys spent. Therefore, this forum of accountability can also determine the success and viability of delivering services to our children and our youth.

Also, there is ministerial accountability. In this area, the government has started to issue business plans with clear objectives and expected outcomes.

Another point is that there is a major restructuring under way in the Ministry of Community and Social Services to ensure that social service agencies do not duplicate services to children, youth and others in need, and that there is a results-oriented approach to services provided, whether direct services or through our transfer agency agreements.

In closing, I want to say that this government is proud of its accomplishments. We're moving forward. We are providing a climate for investment and we're providing

jobs. That is the best way to ensure that Ontario's children reach their potential.

Therefore, I will be voting against this resolution.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise in support of my colleague's resolution. I think of the words of Sir Winston Churchill when he said, "There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies." I think that's all the member is asking: He's asking for the nurturing and the protection of children. How can anyone not support that?

In my 30 years in education, I have seen the changes in children and youth, the changes in their attitudes, the changes in their expectations and the changes in their educational opportunities. But some things over these years have remained constant, and they are: the need for children to experience stability, the need for children to experience success, the need for children and youth to be affirmed and the need for children and youth to feel secure.

If the goal of the Common Sense Revolution was to create a demand for products and services, I'd be the first to stand here today as a former school principal and say, "Yes, Mike Harris and the Conservatives have created that demand for products and services." But unfortunately the demand which is being created is the result of cuts that will damage the fabric and human potential of our province, and very specifically, every community in our province. This human deficit is the education, the health and the safety of Ontario's children.

Within the last 16 months, we've all discussed the impact of budget cuts, job losses, transfers, restructuring and downsizing, privatization and, of course, tax cuts. Most of us instinctively think of our local economy and the provincial deficit, but at a second glance, these ideological and fiscal decisions have had a tremendous impact on hundreds and thousands of private citizens responsible for Ontario's most precious resource: its future, its children. Not only have parents and guardians been affected but hundreds of child and family service agencies and school boards responsible for such necessities as children's mental health services, children's health and safety intervention, early childhood education and child care services have been affected.

When you see this deterioration of our social safety net, one must ask: What effect is the government's ideology having on Ontario's children? To provide an answer to that, you have to look at some of the Common Sense Revolution decisions that have been made by this government. We only have to look at the cuts to social service agencies and in particular to children's aid societies, we only have to look at the new direction for the family support plan to realize that the agenda, although well focused for the bottom line, hurts people, hurts children in particular.

For any government member to believe these changes will help children in Ontario, I suggest they call a 1-800 number quickly for personal and immediate assistance.

Unfortunately the picture only bleakens when we take a look at the state of children's mental health care services and children's education programs. New Common Sense changes include the elimination of mental health residential services for children, as well as reduced

treatment services for individual children, in exchange for an increase in group mental health care services. If we look at the government's interests in children's education, we quickly discover that investing in children's education doesn't make common sense to this government. Our Minister of Education has not only decided that junior kindergarten programs should be optional for school boards, but that these programs should no longer be funded by the province. Let me tell you, when a school board has the decision of accepting a program, an option that isn't funded, or it's supported by the Minister of Education and by the ministry, the options become painfully obvious.

Having served this community as a teacher, vice-principal and principal for all these years, I understand the importance of early childhood education programs and early childhood initiatives. I suggest they are not spending money, they are an investment in the future of our children. That's why my colleague's motion is so important today. That's why my colleague's motion has to be supported. I suggest to this government and to Mike Harris that he and they would do well to listen to the words of Jonathan Swift when he said, "Don't set your wit against a child," and support this resolution.

1140

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to discuss this resolution this morning, because I think it is very important for us to focus our attention on our children and youth and to look at what we are doing through government policy, through our community actions, through our individual actions, and how that is affecting children and youth.

I think any resolution that reminds us of the necessity for us to constantly be monitoring the effect on children and youth of the actions that we do is extremely important. I congratulate the member for Kingston and The Islands for bringing forward this resolution and giving us an opportunity to talk about the realities of our failure to measure, to test against the wellbeing of children and youth every public policy that we bring forward. I think that is an extraordinarily important principle.

The reality is that the mechanisms by which to accomplish a report card such as the member talks about were already developed under the previous government's Premier's Council. The subcommittee on children and youth developed a very strong process, whereby these measurements would be done not by government but by the community itself, by all those in the community involved with children. It's a very interesting document that I would encourage all my colleagues in this House to read, because what the subcommittee on children and youth did was to go out and talk to the affected communities, talk to the professionals, to parents, to children and youth themselves, to look at service delivery and to look at a way in which we could look at how our children and youth are actually doing.

Indeed, the language of indicators the member talks about was very much the language of indicators that was adopted by that committee. We knew that children go through a number of very crucial transition points in their lives and that how they manage to get through those

transition points often is an indicator of how they will do at the next stage of their life.

I congratulate my colleague on using the developmental model for children, because that is what we need to do. We need to look at the development of all of their skills, their personality, their self-esteem, their ability to solve problems, their ability to take hold of themselves as active members of the community. The subcommittee of the Premier's Council on Health looked at those transition points as being various: First of all, the transition from pre-birth to the post-birth period; in other words, what do we do to make sure that children develop well when they are in their mother's womb, how do we ensure they get the nutrition they need, how do we ensure they are protected from adverse environmental effects at that stage, and then, how does the birthing process and the bonding process with the significant others in their lives actually happen in that very early period of time? That's one period we need to look at.

We need to look then at the next period, which is that preschool period in which children are rapidly learning and growing and forming the basis for decision-making later in their lives; then the transition to formal schooling and how children manage to adopt an attitude towards a broader world which takes them into a more formal and institutionalized approach. How do they cope with that approach, what are the supports that we need to give them, how can we help them to get through that transition period in the appropriate way?

The next stage is the stage into young adulthood, what we tend to talk about as the adolescent stage, that time of life when there are rapid physical changes, rapid changes in the breadth of the horizon for young people, rapid changes in their goals and the development of long-term goals. Then finally, of course, is the transition into the workplace, into being a productive citizen at all stages.

Those stages are different for children because their developmental levels are different and the ways in which they develop are different, depending very much on the environment they have. The subcommittee developed a report card that would look at health indicators, at educational indicators, at safety aspects, because we know that abuse of children is a very serious problem in our community. It gets identified again and again, and yet we seem unable to assimilate into our public policies ways that will really keep our children safe.

We need to look at their relationships. One of the things we heard from very young children, as well as young adults, older youth, was the importance of those relationships, the support of those relationships, the mentorship and the feeling of security that comes from having a significant other who is there in an unquestioning way to support you. That was one of the most important things they were looking at.

Cultural development is very important because we know we have a diverse community. Unless children are able to appreciate their own heritage and how that heritage equips them to be good citizens within our community, it is difficult for them to feel the depth of roots that children also talked about as being important to them: "Who am I?" involves more than just me. It

involves my community and that involves my cultural community as well."

The committee also believed that spiritual aspects were important. The committee very clearly said that the concept of self within the larger world, within the broader universe, the sense of whether or not children were going to feel extraordinarily alone or whether they would feel that they had supports often depended very much on their sense of belonging to some religious or spiritual kind of community. That was particularly true for some of the most disadvantaged children: native children, who very often grow up in communities where that connectedness to the great spirit is becoming again, with the revival of native spirituality, a very important aspect of their development.

That work was done and that report card was developed and there was a whole network of groups that were prepared to go into the community and to actually assist the community in doing this kind of information gathering on the health and wellbeing of our children and how they fit into our communities. It's a real tragedy that with cancelling the Premier's Council the work of that committee appears to have got lost. The momentum that was gained appears to be lost and I think that's a real tragedy.

I hear the government members talking about heavy bureaucracy and bureaucratic structures to get this reporting, and I agree with them that that kind of reporting usually is a self-reporting. All the agencies would report on how well they were doing rather than how the children were doing. I don't necessarily think that having this kind of report, which I support very much, is going to be best accomplished through agencies reporting to the government. I think it needs to be broader than that. The agencies are part of the picture, but the rest of the community needs to be involved as well.

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So I would say to the member that if the reporting is to be reported in this place through a designated ministry, that's fine, but that doesn't mean that ministry needs to then take on the responsibility for absolutely every program or that there needs to be a bureaucratic reporting function outside of the financial reporting.

I think the resolution very clearly is open to that kind of a proposal, because the member says, "through a designated ministry" to report. What we had always planned was that once this report card that was being developed by the subcommittee on children and youth of the Premier's Council was developed, yes, of course there would be a report through to the Legislature so this became a part of the permanent record which we could be proud of in this community, and it would become a template against which we could measure further social policy changes and so on. But I would say to the member that doesn't necessarily have to imply the kind of bureaucratic structure that his bill that he is going to introduce would necessarily imply.

I also say to the member that the action plan idea is very good. The whole point of doing a community report card is to see where we need to do better, not to blame people for not doing well enough but to say: "Okay, as a community, we do not seem to be providing sufficient

supports for the children of our community in this area or this area. What can we do to do that?" The whole purpose of the subcommittee on children and youth's report card was to galvanize communities to take responsibility for giving that kind of support to children, youth and their families, to on a very local level and a very clearly accountable level say, "We are responsible for all our children, and we are prepared, as a community, to be a more welcoming and a healthier place for our children."

While we are going to be supporting the member's resolution, I do not think we will support his bill, simply because under the Child and Family Services Act that kind of reporting he is talking about we do not think is going to accomplish what he wants.

We think, first of all, the Child and Family Services Act is specifically looking at child protection issues and child protection agencies. The whole issue of the indicators of health, safety and security for children is far broader. We need to be talking about all those who educate our children, all those who do recreational activities with our children, all those who are working in cultural and in spiritual areas, all those who work in direct and indirect health areas. We need to learn how to all become part of the team that is focused on supporting our children and youth to attain the kind of indicators that we now know, from the studies that have been done, are very important.

Yes, we need a report here. We need some way to measure how we're doing. We need some way to find out where we have deficits and how we need to fill those. We need to be very aware of every action that governments take that impinges directly on the health and wellbeing of children. I suggest to the government that this kind of report card needs to be done on the changes you have made to the health, wellbeing and social justice for children in this province.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I am pleased to fully support this resolution put forward by my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands. Especially when the government continues to employ cuts that affect children, this is all the more reason why it's important that we know how our children are faring. We need to know how they are doing on many fronts and all of the developmental stages, from the transition to life, from life to the work roles in the workplace to community and family life.

Some of the indicators that are important to look at, and we could choose from a variety of examples, would be: How many mothers are receiving good prenatal care? How many children are in licensed and regulated child care programs or have access to early childhood education programs? How many are ready to learn when they arrive in school? What social skills do they have? How many are growing up in poverty? How many become involved in violent incidents in schools or outside of schools or with youth crime? How many are abused and neglected? How many have disabilities? How many participate in their communities in recreational activities, cultural activities, sports activities?

I could go on and on. The interesting point is that generally this information is already available. The first

choice of indicators does not have to be extensive. The joint vision of a report card by the Premier's Council and the Laidlaw Foundation would have had only eight or nine indicators. Standards for measuring statewide progress and institutional performance have been used in a number of states for some years now in the US. Perhaps the best known of these are the Oregon benchmarks. Oregon was the first Legislature to adopt measurable indicators to guide and monitor a state's progress. Benchmarks are indicators of the progress that Oregon has set to achieve in its strategic vision, and children and their progress are part of that.

In Canada there have been a number of initiatives that have attempted to establish a report card mechanism. Until the Ontario Premier's Council was axed a year ago, its children and youth committee was working in partnership with the Laidlaw Foundation's children-at-risk program to develop a report card on healthy children and the outcomes at the local and provincial level.

This was the implementation of their report, Yours, Mine and Ours, which is here. It was the only report of the Premier's Council to be released in the House and it's an excellent report. At the national level the Canadian Institute of Child Health, a non-profit organization, has published two profiles. The focus of their health profiles of Canada's children represents a shift away from illness to health in its broadest sense, a recognition that the determinants of health are broader than simply health services.

At the national level there is also a new initiative of the Canadian Council on Social Development, a new annual publication called *The Progress of Canada's Children*. The first year's findings will be released shortly. The goal of this publication is to develop measures that track the wellbeing of children and families in Canada. It discusses the influences of shaping the lives of children ranging from the economic security of families to the resources available to families.

At the provincial level, the private Laidlaw Foundation has a children-at-risk team that has been working for over five and a half years now. The focus of this project is to develop and test new perspectives and practices intended to contribute to the improved life prospects of Canada's children and youth.

All of this research is available to us. We need to pull it together. Surely now we can take it and roll it into a provincial model or piggyback it on other research indicators for ourselves to monitor our children.

I wish to thank my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands for putting together and putting forward this resolution. It's a very important one. It's a motion on behalf of children in this province. Children obviously are our future, not just demographically, but in every sense of the word. Good information helps good decision-making, and what decisions are more important than how our children are growing up?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Kingston and The Islands has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to thank my colleagues, the members for Fort William, Sudbury and

Ottawa Centre, as well as the members for Nickel Belt, London Centre, Brant-Haldimand and St Catharines-Brock, for their input into this matter.

First of all, this was a non-partisan attempt to bring this issue forward. There were a couple of comments made, particularly by the member for St Catharines-Brock, to the effect that there was an assumption in this resolution that government is not doing enough. That is not so. The resolution is to determine whether or not government is not doing enough, but there are absolutely no assumptions built into it at all.

It's also interesting to note that if we're talking about value-for-money audits, according to the Coalition for Children, Families and Communities, they estimate that for every dollar that is spent on high-quality preventive children's services, it saves society \$7.16 in remedial education, health, policing, court and custody costs.

The attempt here is to simply get a collective view as to how children are doing in our society at any one given time and whether the individual government programs that are out there, not on an individual basis but on a collective basis, are helping children in society. That's what this is all about. It is not so much about financial accountability but the accountability each of us in this Legislature owes to the children of this province. That's what it's all about. I would urge the members of this assembly to support the resolution.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (IMPAIRED DRIVING), 1996

LOI DE 1996

MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CONDUITE AVEC FACULTÉS AFFAIBLIES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 43. Is there any person opposed to a vote on this motion at this time?

Mrs Marland has moved second reading of Bill 85. Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There will be a five-minute bell after we deal with the other item.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal now with ballot item number 44. Is there any member opposed to taking a vote at this time?

Mr Gerretsen has moved private member's notice of motion number 28. Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (IMPAIRED DRIVING), 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CONDUITE AVEC FACULTÉS AFFAIBLIES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Second reading of Bill 85: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart
Baird, John R.	Ford, Douglas B.	McLeod, Lyn
Barrett, Toby	Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia
Bartolucci, Rick	Galt, Doug	Parker, John L.
Bassett, Isabel	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Grandmaître, Bernard	Preston, Peter
Boushy, Dave	Grimmett, Bill	Ramsay, David
Boyd, Marion	Guzzo, Gary J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bradley, James J.	Harnick, Charles	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Carr, Gary	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Ron	Sheehan, Frank
Christopherson, David	Jordan, W. Leo	Silipo, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Skarica, Toni
Churley, Marilyn	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tilson, David
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	Tsubouchi, David H.
Curling, Alvin	Leadston, Gary L.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Danford, Harry	Marland, Margaret	Wood, Bob
Doyle, Ed	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len
Elliott, Brenda	Martin, Tony	Young, Terence H.
Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 74; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 94(k), the bill will be referred to —

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): To the justice committee.

The Acting Speaker: It is agreed. The bill is referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

There will be a 30-second delay until the next ballot.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Where did the cabinet members go? Why did the cabinet leave?

The Acting Speaker: There is nothing out of order.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Ballot item number 44, private member's notice of motion number 28: All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Doyle, Ed	Martin, Tony
Baird, John R.	Fisher, Barbara	Martiniuk, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Ford, Douglas B.	McLeod, Lyn
Bassett, Isabel	Gerretsen, John	Munro, Julia

Beaubien, Marcel	Grandmaître, Bernard	Parker, John L.
Bisson, Gilles	Guzzo, Gary J.	Patten, Richard
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Marion	Johns, Helen	Preston, Peter
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Ron	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Jordan, W. Leo	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Carr, Gary	Klees, Frank	Ross, Lillian
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Shea, Derwyn
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Laughren, Floyd	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Conway, Sean G.	Leadston, Gary L.	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	Young, Terence H.
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Froese, Tom	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Galt, Doug	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Smith, Bruce
Danford, Harry	Grimmett, Bill	Stewart, R. Gary
Elliott, Brenda	Hudak, Tim	Tilson, David
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50, the nays are 18.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 12:20, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1217 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FINANCEMENT DES INSTITUTIONS D'ÉDUCATION FRANCOPHONES

M. Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa-Est) : Je voudrais inviter le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones à réfléchir en ces jours où une partie importante de la population s'appête à montrer au gouvernement Harris qu'elle en a assez des réductions budgétaires sauvages.

Depuis l'arrivée des conservateurs au pouvoir, les francophones de l'Ontario subissent des réductions budgétaires qui ont des conséquences graves sur leur communauté.

Prenez le cas de la Cité collégiale, du Collège Boréal et du Collège des Grands Lacs, qui ont été créés très récemment. Ces collèges francophones sont en période de formation comme les collèges de langue anglaise d'il y a 25 ans. Ils apprennent à servir leur clientèle répartie sur un immense territoire. Ils ont la tâche très difficile d'offrir des programmes à jour à une clientèle minoritaire.

En plus, on leur fait subir des réductions importantes dans leurs budgets déjà très limités. La même chose s'applique à l'enseignement primaire et secondaire. Pour toutes sortes de raisons, les institutions d'enseignement en langue française en général n'ont jamais eu assez de ressources pour satisfaire à tous leurs besoins.

J'ai une question pour le ministre : vaut-il vraiment la peine d'imposer des reculs à la population francophone, comme vous le faites, uniquement pour donner une réduction d'impôts aux plus riches ?"

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to focus on problems with the family support plan caused directly by this Conservative government's decision to lay off staff and close regional offices.

Last Wednesday the Sudbury office closed for good. Ten boxes of unopened mail were transferred to Toronto to be dealt with by someone somewhere at some point. No doubt the boxes contained support payments needed by many women who are calling my office because their cheques are late. They used to receive their support payments on a regular basis until the government cuts in August. We know the delays will continue.

It appears that some local Sudbury employers have not been told that payor deductions should now be sent to Downsview for processing. Yesterday our office received a copy of a support deduction notice to a local employer which was dated October 7. It advised the employer to remit the payment to the Sudbury office on Cedar Street. The payment is due November 1. The Sudbury office was closed one week after this notice was sent to the local employer.

How many other local employers will forward payments to the closed Sudbury office, only to have these forwarded to Toronto to have the cheques sent back to families in Sudbury? How could such information have gone out to an employer one week before the Sudbury office shut down?

In September, 13 women had to apply for temporary assistance from social assistance in Sudbury because their support cheques had not arrived. These women used to receive their payments on a regular basis. They and thousands of other women and families in Ontario are now facing financial hardship directly because of the cuts made by this government.

ANDREW McLEOD

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to recognize the exceptional achievement of one of my constituents.

Recently, Andrew McLeod of Scarborough was awarded the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. This award recognizes exceptional acts of selflessness, generosity and kindness and outstanding contributions to community life. It is the highest recognition of good citizenship that can be bestowed upon an individual and allows for the designation "OMC" to be attached to the recipient's name.

This year 12 exceptional Ontarians were chosen from 120 nominations by an advisory council and were presented their medals by my honourable colleague the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Andrew McLeod OMC has a long history of combating racism. He has worked with many Scarborough organizations to ensure that all people, particularly young people, have opportunities to participate fully in society. Andrew

played an integral role in the decision to form Scarborough council's community and race relations committee.

As well, Andrew has served on the Scarborough Human Services Race Relations Committee, the Human Services Board, the Tropicana Community Services organization, the St Bartholomew social committee and the Scarborough Initiative Coalition.

On behalf of every resident of Scarborough, I wish to publicly thank Andrew for his dedicated and selfless efforts.

I'd also like to say hello to my friends from northern Ontario who are in the gallery today.

CITY OF OTTAWA

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to say a few words about a city that my colleague the member for Etobicoke-Humber earlier this week seemed to take pleasure in not seeing on a list for being considered one of the finest cities in the world. Therefore I would like to tell him something about the fine city of Ottawa.

First of all Ottawa is thriving with high-tech industry. It's called Silicon Valley North; within the very small area of Ottawa-Carleton over \$2.5 billion worth of software is sold around the world. It makes a tremendous contribution. In spite of the downsizing that took place in the Ottawa-Carleton area, Ottawa has one of the lowest unemployment rates and is one of the fastest-growing job creators in all of Ontario.

It is a dream for those who like to participate in skiing, and skating and sailing on the lakes and rivers that surround the city. Ottawa has fine museums and some great places in which to live. It is a beautiful city full of lovely parks and green spaces.

I would like the member to know that I am proud to be a Canadian; I am proud to be an Ontarian. I am proud of every part of Ontario and every city. I'm proud to live in Ottawa. I think it's a great city of the world.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Among the multitudes who will be attending Saturday's Days of Action protest against the Harris agenda will be many thousands of Metro residents who are angry that this Tory government is systematically dismantling Ontario's environmental regulatory framework and laying off thousands of staff whose job it is to protect our environment and our health.

Why might they be angry? Here's a partial list: The Premier weakened the Planning Act to allow urban sprawl, opened the door to widespread garbage incineration, weakened dozens of regulations pertaining to the pollution of our air and water, weakened the scope of the Environmental Bill of Rights, cut back citizen involvement and allowed intervenor funding to expire, eliminated energy efficiency programs, cut funding to the green communities program, eliminated funding for the blue box program, cut way back on forest management and started to open up the Niagara Escarpment to further mining and development, and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

The Premier continues to comfort himself with the notion that Ontarians don't care about the environment these days. But Ontarians know that when we talk about environmental protection, especially when we're talking about pollution of our air and water, we're essentially talking about our human health. That is not a special interest. That's a concern of every Ontarian and every member in this House.

FRANK PICKARD

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I rise today to note the death of Frank Pickard, the visionary president and chief executive officer of Falconbridge, Canada's largest mining company. He died on September 25 at the age of only 63.

Frank Pickard was a miner's miner. His career with Falconbridge began in 1950, when he was only a high school student. After graduating from Queen's University he officially joined the company and worked his way up to the position of president and chief executive officer in 1991. His tenure at the top led to Falconbridge's return to public markets, its bid for Voisey's Bay and its mine developments at Raglan in Quebec and Collahuasi in Chile. These are but a few examples of the scope of Frank Pickard's vision for the company he loved.

In June this year Frank Pickard's contribution to Canadian mining was recognized by Laurentian University in Sudbury, which granted him an honorary doctorate in business. A scholarship fund is being established in his name to ensure that his legacy continues.

My memories of Frank are of a giant of a man with a warm, generous heart, boundless energy and an enormous love for and pride of his wife, Audrey, who is in the members' gallery today, and his daughters, Beverly and Barbara.

He will be greatly mourned by all of this country.

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LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today is the last day for our current student pages. Unlike other pages before, this group was part of some unique history. The election of our new Speaker will certainly be one of this group's lasting memories of their experiences here.

Unfortunately, because of the poor business practices of this government, this group will also be the first to not have their pictures taken individually with the new Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor or the riding members. The reason is simple. The photographer was terminated to save dollars. But when the government pursued outsourcing for this service, they found out it would cost 600% more. The common sense solution? Cancel the pictures. No longer will the pages have this lasting tangible memento of their experiences here at Queen's Park. Beat up again by a government that doesn't care about our children, our future leaders.

Congratulations to our Sudbury student ambassador and page, Stephen Kingerski, a student at St Francis separate school, and all the other pages for their fine dedication to service in the Legislature. Certainly some of

the parents and grandparents are in the galleries today, and we want to thank them as well for setting such a fine example for these young leaders, these future leaders in our province.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to speak ever so briefly on the very important demonstration that's going on in this community over this last week and to really come to a head tomorrow and Saturday in Metro Toronto, and that's the Days of Action.

There's some question from members across the way and from some of the press out there as to the legitimacy of this kind of democratic expression of concern and frustration with a government that frankly is not listening, and I want to just speak about two things in respect to that.

One is the very destructive and radical agenda that we have watched imposed on the people of Ontario over the last year and some few months: the imposition of major cuts in welfare, which hurts those who are most vulnerable in our communities: Bill 7, the changing of the Labour Relations Act; Bill 26 and the way that bully bill was put through; the Fewer Politicians Act; and the process that was used to implement those very drastic changes to the way that we do business in Ontario. That's what this demonstration is about.

Who's coming? People from across Ontario, ordinary citizens, your neighbours, your family members, people who work in your communities who provide services and people from Sault Ste Marie — four or five busloads, hundreds of people from Sault Ste Marie coming to Toronto to express their frustration with this government.

COLLEEN PETERSON

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am honoured and deeply saddened to rise in the House to pay tribute to a great country and western singer.

Colleen Peterson, the 45-year-old international recording star, who was the winner of a Canadian Country Music Award and a Juno, who toured and recorded with Neil Sedaka, Gordon Lightfoot, Sylvia Tyson and Michelle Wright, recently passed away due to cancer.

Colleen Peterson was truly a remarkable person, both inside and outside of the music industry. She dedicated her talents to helping those within her community of Peterborough. Three years ago, she held a benefit concert to raise money for a \$100,000 church renovation project.

In 1995, she donated her time to write and perform a song to help promote the United Way campaign. Colleen was also very active in the local humane and animal societies. Colleen displayed one of the most courageous and heroic outlooks on life. As Rev Addison noted while visiting her in the hospital, Colleen wanted very badly to live and never talked about dying of cancer but of living with cancer. Colleen Peterson was a remarkable and a very rare individual. Her love of life and true spirit of optimism should be an example to each of us.

On behalf of myself and all of my constituents in the Peterborough riding, I send my regrets and deepest condolences to the Peterson family.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I rise today to report back to the people of Ontario on this government's achievements in road safety. One year ago today, the Harris government introduced a package of short- and long-term measures to make Ontario's roads safer. Last year we set ourselves an ambitious agenda, but this government's road safety plan is a plan of action. Let me tell you about our many achievements to date.

Last year we promised to get tough on drinking drivers. We promised to create a law to automatically suspend the licences of drunk drivers. We have. We promised to continue to fund RIDE spot checks. We have.

We also said we would target specific driving problems and make traffic enforcement more effective. To do that, we said we would install video cameras in Highway Ranger cruisers — we have; remove certain seatbelt exemptions — we have; and make suspended drivers pay to have their licences returned — we have.

Just as importantly, we said we would set up teams of OPP Highway Rangers to target aggressive drivers, especially during rush-hour in the greater Toronto area. We have. In the last 14 months, the Ontario Provincial Police Highway Rangers have pulled over 70,000 vehicles. They have laid 50,000 charges, including 100 for impaired driving during the daytime, 750 speeding charges where the driver was going more than 50 kilometres over the speed limit, and 300 charges of driving without insurance.

To improve safety in the trucking industry, we said we would increase fines for truck safety violations — we have; enforce axle weights for gravel trucks — we have; and make training mandatory for truck wheel installers and commercial drivers who adjust their own air brakes — we have. In the past year, we also hired 35 more enforcement officers and added a mobile inspection station to round out our truck enforcement, plus we introduced electronic truck monitoring to allow safe carriers to bypass inspection stations.

We are not stopping here. During this session and next, we will complete the next stage of our plan. The Harris government is preparing legislation to further target unsafe truckers as well as drinking and aggressive drivers. We have created alternatives to annual testing for drivers over the age of 80. We are evaluating options to treat repeat impaired drivers for alcohol abuse.

In the area of truck safety, we are preparing legislation to create a carrier safety rating system, assessing recommendations for a conduct review system for truck drivers, creating more effective sanctions to get unsafe carriers off the road sooner, and reforming the commercial driver licensing system and creating a form of graduated licensing for truck drivers.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the success of graduated licensing for beginning drivers, a program implemented by the previous government with the support of all three parties. Its success is one reason we intend to have a similar program for truck drivers.

Road safety is a complex issue with no ready-made solutions. We know there is still much work to do. We need to ensure all drivers are properly trained. We need to increase traffic enforcement to stop dangerous and aggressive drivers. We need to crack down on unsafe trucks before they're involved in a collision. And we need to get drinking drivers off our roads. Our main challenge in the long term will be to anticipate road safety problems and be prepared to respond to them.

During the past year, many groups have rallied around us to help improve road safety. This is an encouraging sign. To truly have an impact, we need the support of all Ontarians.

1350

Ontario's plans for action on road safety are not a one-time effort, nor are they restricted to the Ministry of Transportation. They are a comprehensive set of measures that involves many ministries. Our combined measures will help change attitudes and put an end to the deaths, injuries and destruction on our roads.

We've made a lot of progress in the past year; however, we still have a long way to go. We will not rest. We will continue to make sure Ontario's roads are as safe as possible.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I would like to inform the House about the results of the first independent survey commissioned by an Ontario government to find out why people are leaving the welfare system. I am encouraged to report that the majority of those surveyed left the welfare system for the workforce.

We commissioned this survey because existing ministry data indicated general trends but did not provide specific reasons for people leaving the welfare system. More than 180,000 people have stopped relying on welfare between June of last year and September of this year. It is important for us to know the reasons behind those numbers if we are to use this information to help guide future programs.

The survey was conducted by the Levy-Coughlin Partnership in August of this year. This company surveyed over 2,100 former welfare recipients from across Ontario who agreed to participate voluntarily. The sample is made up of people who left the social assistance system in May 1996. Almost 62% of respondents gave employment-related reasons for leaving social assistance. The survey's highlights indicate that more than 46% of those surveyed had found a full-time job, nearly 10% had found a part-time job and over 6% left welfare for a variety of other employment-related reasons.

We will be using the results of this report to make improvements to our ministry's existing data collection system. We also realize that we have only started to create a climate in Ontario that enables people to leave the welfare system for the workforce.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: They must be having difficulty with positive news.

We recognize that more has to be done to help even more people get back to work. We are committed to providing recipients with the supports and incentives they need to get back into the workforce. That's why we are carefully phasing in a work-for-welfare program that includes employment supports and community service to help people break their dependency on welfare.

I'd also like to report, because I'm sure the honourable members across the way may have missed the fact, that workfare is well on its way in Peel, Algoma, Kent county, Muskoka, Nipissing, Brockville, North Bay, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Timiskaming, London, Barrie, Prescott and Russell, and Grey-Owen Sound, communities that are participating and want to participate in helping to get people off the welfare system.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This proves that you can't solve the safety problem on our highways by public relations and by press conferences. This morning we had another flying truck tire hit a driver on the 401 at Keele. If this minister really wanted to do something about unsafe trucks, he would do two simple things. These are two things he won't do, and I don't know why he won't do them.

He should have automatic suspensions on the roadside for unsafe trucks. He won't do that. The second thing he won't do, and I don't know why, is that he shouldn't allow companies that have over 500 violations of unsafe trucks still to operate on the roads of Ontario while they're under suspension. If they're under suspension, they should be off the roads.

The third thing you should do is that these unsafe truck companies that have 500 violations, that have unsafe truck records, shouldn't be given government contracts. If this minister was serious, what he would also do is look at things like red-light cameras at dangerous high-collision intersections where people are running red lights daily. He refuses to look at that safety device.

If you are really trying to tell the people of Ontario you are serious, do those three things, because all the public relations in the world, all the whiz kids who are spinning these things, all the photo ops, will not make our highways safe. If you ask the people of Ontario, they know that nobody's obeying the speed limit. The only thing that keeps the cars at the speed limit are the traffic jams, the traffic congestion and the flying wheels. People are afraid to drive on our highways. All you do is have press conferences and photo ops.

Do those two things at least: Have automatic suspension for unsafe trucks on the highways, and stop this Russian roulette with people under appeal getting government contracts and being on the roads while they're under appeal with 500 violations. Do that.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): In response to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I am absolutely amazed at this \$80,000 public relations effort by this government. It is shameful. This effort is masked by a flawed survey, a survey that spoke to 2,000 out of

180,000 recipients, a survey that, when they called, found 2,781 out of 12,000 phones disconnected. Where did those people go?

The reality is that you did this to continue the game you're playing with the people of Ontario. People who are in shelters were not phoned. People who are homeless don't have phones to respond to your survey. People who are living on the streets as a result of your decisions do not have phones to respond. This is a phoney survey. This survey shows absolutely nothing. This survey simply shows that people who are working have telephones.

Let me give you a reality check: Food bank use in the GTA has gone up by 71% in the last year, after it had dropped by 45% in the previous two years. By your own numbers, there are 57,000 more Ontarians out of work today than a year ago. This smoke and mirrors campaign is not going to fool the people of Ontario. People who have left the welfare rolls as a result of your draconian Third World welfare policy are ending up on the street, ending up in food banks, ending up in shelters across this province. Anything you do through your phoney survey is not going to solve this problem.

This is typical of your bumper sticker solution and approach to solving every government problem you deal with. You spent \$80,000 of taxpayers' money to tell us that of 2,000 people on welfare who have phones, 1,000 of them are working. That's great. What about the other 178,000 who are off the system? Where did they go? I would ask this government to get on with real reform. Stop playing these public relations games. Remember that your cuts are hurting people and they're hurting children. Let me finish by reminding you that 41% of food bank use in this province is by children. Please think about that and bring some real welfare reform and stop playing this public relations game.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Only a Minister of Transportation from a Conservative government would have the nerve to stand up in this House today and to try to say that all is well on the highways of Ontario when it comes to truck safety. The wheels are literally falling off the trucks as they run down Highway 401 and every other highway across Ontario. The minister doesn't exactly have a spotless record when it comes to the question of highway safety. People are being killed on our highways, people are actually being killed in their homes, and we still have people driving on highways who have had their licences under suspension from the Ministry of Transportation — all at a time when, over the last year, the funding to the Ministry of Transportation has been cut by taking away hardworking people who were charged to make sure that the initiatives of the government when it came to highway safety were put in place. What did the government do? They fired them. There's nobody out on the highways to watch.

1400

We look at highway maintenance when it comes to the winter months of this great province. It is the Minister of Transportation who cut the funding to highway maintenance in the winter in northern Ontario, and as a result literally thousands of people ended up in the ditch,

stranded last winter on the highways of northern Ontario based on your cuts to your ministry. You're not exactly spot on on that.

On the question of drinking and driving, this is interesting because the stats prove that the number of people who are drinking and driving has actually increased in the province of Ontario, all at a time when what did the government do? They cut the funding to the RIDE program. They cut the funding to municipalities where dollars go to the police forces to make sure that the policies of the government are followed.

This is not exactly a great day for the Minister of Transportation to be standing in this House and trying to tell us all is well in the province of Ontario, because it is not. Things are going in the opposite direction, all because of your policies, and we're not better off.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I watched the minister outside the House earlier today in a scrum as her handlers were trying to drag her away from the press, recognizing that she has so little to say about what the Tories have done to the poor and to women and their children in this province. This is something the member for Etobicoke West might have referred to as a no-brainer.

What this minister doesn't tell us is about the 40% of the respondents who were forced off welfare for whom there were no jobs. She doesn't tell us about the 11% of respondents, women and their children, who were forced back into hostile and abusive and dangerous homes with their former spouses. What this minister doesn't tell us is about the nature of these so-called jobs that people were forced off welfare to assume. She wasn't able to tell us about their permits and about their rate of pay, and whether those jobs were there a month and two and three months later. She wasn't able to tell us, notwithstanding the number of people who were forced off the welfare rolls, how many came on to the welfare rolls.

What's interesting here is what isn't being said. We're talking about 80 grand of the public funds being spent on a no-brainer by a minister who is as smug and as arrogant and as aloof and removed from the realities of the people her ministry is designed to serve as any has ever been. If she wants to, if she cares that much, she had better get off her butt, get out of her damned limo and go talk —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I appreciate that the member for Welland-Thorold is worked up with his response, but I ask him to withdraw "get off her butt." That is not parliamentary.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw "get off her butt." She should stop sitting on her brains and get out of her limo and respond —

The Speaker: No. I ask you to withdraw that, please.

Mr Kormos: Withdrawn. But I tell this minister here and now, if you want to look and speak to poor people in this province, people whose lives are being devastated by this government's policies, walk a few yards to north Queen's Park and speak to the people in Harrisville, the tent city. She wants to get out of her limousine and start looking at the people whose lives are devastated as they

approach Christmas: single mothers with no income and with even less to support themselves and their children and with no jobs to look forward to.

This government speaks of workfare — workfare that simply isn't going to work, workfare that isn't happening anywhere in the province of Ontario, workfare that's being rejected by community after community, by volunteer agency after volunteer agency. This government's engaged today in an \$80,000 attack on the very poorest, the most vulnerable and the weakest. She ain't fooling them. She's not fooling us. She should be ashamed of herself. By God, she should resign.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Grand Chief Charles Fox of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): As was alluded to earlier, this is the last day for the pages for this session. We know they've done a very good job. I've been very appreciative of the help they've given me in trying to understand the job I've just gotten. I would take this time to thank you for your good work. I welcome you back here again, should you want to come, and ask that everyone in the House, as normally, give them a round of applause.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. It concerns the enormous gap between what your Minister of Health tells this Legislature and what is really going on in hospitals where patients are being hurt by your budget cuts. Yesterday we told you about the firings at Peterborough Civic Hospital and St Joseph's Health Centre, where 97 staff, including 46 nurses, received their layoff notices. We read a media release that said patients would be hurt by your \$6-million cut to their hospitals. Your minister said, "I can absolutely guarantee you that the press release you have says neither that quality will suffer nor that services are going to diminish and patient care will suffer." Is this still your government's position? I have in my hands the media release from the two hospitals, which says very clearly that your cuts "will also result in fewer admissions, shorter lengths of stay and noticeable differences in the care which is available."

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I am not surprised that the letter you have says there will be fewer admissions. The whole goal in hospital restructuring and medical advances that have been made is that there would be less time in hospital and more in the community. As has been pointed out to you on many occasions, we have made announcement after announcement where there are

more opportunities, more jobs for nurses in community, in care, in a number of the reinvestments that we have announced. We have made some 4,000 new jobs, as you know, in the major shift to community-based care that was announced earlier this year by the Minister of Health.

Will there be changes? Yes. Will changes be easy? No, it's never easy when you're established along a certain pattern or a way to make changes.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer the question.

Hon Mr Harris: But are they necessary? Every hospital administrator, every board, every doctor, every nurse, has told us that the status quo we inherited was a disgrace and had to be changed if we're going to have a world-class health —

The Speaker: The question has been answered.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I hate to disagree with you, but the question wasn't answered, because the Premier totally missed the point. The press release says there will be less patient care. You and your minister are living in some kind of a fantasy world where you can cut the hospital budget, you can see nurses laid off and yet you don't think anybody's going to get hurt. It was the same story last week. The new chief executive officer at the merged Hamilton Civic and Chedoke-McMaster hospitals said very clearly that your cuts would lead to 2,000 firings, or one in four employees. Your minister stood in this House and in his rather glib way said, "I don't know on what basis that comment was founded." I bet he regrets making that comment. Mr Rowand does not regret his comments; he stands by them. When the CEO of the merged hospitals, a man who is an experienced administrator and a health care expert, says that it is not the merger but your funding cuts that are going to kill 2,000 jobs, whom do you believe? Mr Rowand or your minister?

Hon Mr Harris: I believe that Mr Rowand and the Minister of Health are two very talented people. They're both committed and both intent on providing better services in the future, world-class health care services to the people of Ontario. Clearly we not only have honoured our commitment to cut not one cent from health care but have increased health care funding by \$300 million so far since taking office. If we are able to continue along this track, then —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Thousands of nurses are losing their jobs and Mikey stands here and says, "Not a cent less." Not real. The Premier has no credibility and he should get the hell out, Mr Speaker. He should resign.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, that's not parliamentary language, nor is it parliamentary sentiment. Please withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, you either can just apologize and withdraw or not.

Mr Pouliot: I withdraw.

Hon Mr Harris: So that as we honour our commitment, not only not to cut one cent from the health care envelope, but to increase the funding to it, clearly there are new technologies, new techniques, new equipment that need to be there to meet the health care services in the future.

1410

It has not been made easier by the fact that we had 10 years and two governments that refused to make any of those decisions; just put it off for another day. Another day has arrived, we're making the decisions and, by and large, there's overwhelming support in the hospital community for what it is we're doing.

Mrs McLeod: The bottom line is that neither the Premier nor the Minister of Health want to know what's happening. They don't want to know what impact their cuts are having. The Premier doesn't want to remember that it was not his plan to close hospitals. Clearly their attitude is that people don't matter; it is only money that matters for this government. So I'm going to put the question, the concern about hospital closures, into a money context.

The director of the Hamilton-Wentworth economic development committee has said that your hospital cuts and your 2,000 firings are going to cost his region \$6 million, and the ripple effect on businesses will cost a further \$3 million — a total of \$9 million. Premier, how much evidence does it take? How many fired nurses, how many destroyed businesses does it take, whether it is in Hamilton or Peterborough or Sudbury or Thunder Bay or Kitchener or Warton or Toronto, before you will admit what everyone knows, that your \$1.3-billion cut to hospital budgets is hurting patients and killing local economies?

Hon Mr Harris: If I follow the logic, our 300 million brand-new dollars in health care would have created lots of jobs. Let's be thankful for that too.

Mrs McLeod: We continue to despair.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I'll place my second question to the Attorney General. Minister, for literally weeks now, members of the opposition have been raising concerns about the sheer chaos in the family support plan, the chaos that you created by closing regional offices before you had any new service in place, the chaos that is going to continue because your solution is the wrong one. A 1-800 number will not work. You say you're making things better every time we raise the question, but the fact is, you've made things worse, things are still getting worse and they are not going to get better if you persist in this misguided plan.

On September 13, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record called on your government to do whatever it takes to get support payments to children and their parents. They stated, and I quote, "The dead-beats here are provincial politicians and bureaucrats who bungled an overhaul of the family support plan."

Minister, the Record knows and we all know that your cost cutting, your staff cutting, your penny-pinching are hurting vulnerable people, and it's kids who are being hurt most. Will you stop now pretending that everything is fine and will you get serious about fixing the sheer mess you've made?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition that I'm very serious about fixing the

mess that has existed in the family support plan for the last 10 years. The fact is, we have had in the family support plan arrears that have climbed to \$900 million; \$900 million that no one, until this government, was prepared to do anything about.

We have had a problem at the family support plan that perpetually has prevented people from getting in touch with the plan, that has prevented people from getting answers to their problems. We are reorganizing the plan to answer those criticism and to provide the plan for the first time ever with enforcement techniques to get money to women and children.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, it's a disaster. It's an unmitigated disaster. You probably can't fix it unless you stop and turn the whole thing around. In fact, one of your spokespersons called on people who are caught up in this nightmare to be patient. If I can continue to quote the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, as they put it, "Those words could have been spoken as the Titanic sank, with as little positive result."

Minister, it is serious, because this time it's not a ship that's sinking, it is families and it is their children. These are families who can't pay their rent, these are families who cannot feed their children. Those are the parents we're hearing from in our constituency offices. We're hearing from parents who aren't getting their cheques; they can't pay for their groceries. We're hearing also, ironically, from the parents who are paying their support, and they are frustrated and angry because the money isn't getting to their kids.

I've brought just a few samples into the House today, Minister. I'm not going to attempt to give them to you individually. This is from my constituency office. It's a backlog of 30 cases as of today, backlogged for the last two months. Here's a small sample of the cases that have come into the constituency office in Windsor-Sandwich. There are 34 outstanding cases as of today, again outstanding for two months.

Every single member's office is seeing the same thing. It goes on every day. It gets worse every day. Will you not finally acknowledge it is a mess and do something real for people to fix it?

Hon Mr Harnick: The family support plan has been a mess for 10 years. I have received numbers of requests from people in this legislative chamber about people who hadn't received their cheques. I have reviewed all of those and we have endeavoured to get answers as quickly as we can. The remarkable thing is that most of those requests, the vast majority, are things that have been occurring within the family support plan on a perpetual basis. The reorganization we are doing is to deal directly with the problems that the Leader of the Opposition has brought to my attention. This reorganization is long overdue and we are determined that in this reorganization we are going to correct the longstanding problems that have existed in the family support plan for the last 10 years.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, how many cases do we have to bring you before you snap out of this Never-never Land? The facts are so simple to anybody but you. You shut down the regional offices, you put in place a 1-800 number and nobody is there to answer the telephone.

People can't get answers. MPPs' offices are phoning over and over again. They're faxing over and over again. They get no response at all. I must confess, I had a constituent who finally, after weeks, did get a return call from the 1-800 number. She got a live person and the live person gave her completely different information than she was given by the computer weeks before, so she's in total confusion and the bottom line is she still doesn't have any money. We've got a case here of a parent who has been paying his support, whose wages are still being deducted, 50% of his cheque every paycheque, but he is not in arrears and he keeps losing 50% of his paycheque. It is a disaster, Minister. Closing the regional offices was a disaster. The 1-800 number is a disaster. Will you at least put enough staff and enough resources in to answer the phone today and then will you change this disastrous plan?

Hon Mr Harnick: We are in the course of changing what has been a disastrous plan for the last 10 years. We are determined to see this through and to make this plan right for the first time, to give this plan the tools to collect money, to give this plan the opportunity and the tools to answer the questions that clients of the plan have not been able to have answered ever. This is not something new and this is taking a major effort in terms of the staff of the plan to reconstitute the plan, to make it work and we are determined to get it done and we will get it done.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): No one has destroyed the family support plan like this Attorney General.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. Premier, over the next two days Ontario will see the extent to which you have polarized this province. People will see how much you have taken from health care, from education, from seniors and from children in order to finance your phoney tax scheme for your wealthy friends. People are going to express their frustration that your government only seems to listen to the wealthy and the powerful. Premier, it's a very simple question. Do you understand now that it's your government's cuts to health care, to education, to children, to seniors and your phoney tax break for your wealthy friends that is pushing people out in the street to protest against your government? Do you understand that now?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Inherent in the question, who we listen to — and I want to say the tax cut is very real. It is 30%. For lower-income people it is more than 30%, but it averages 30%. It's a little less for some in the higher incomes, but for low-income people it is in excess of 30%. Contrary to what the member says, it's not phoney. It's very real and it is having an effect and it's part of why close to 100,000 new jobs have been created in the province of Ontario.

The member also I think in his question alluded to, who do we listen to? I'll tell you who we listen to. We listen to the member for Lake Nipigon, who said: "When

you're in debt, the first thing you do is you look at yourself and you reduce spending. The government deserves some applause; let's be fair. They've shown courage. They've adhered to a good deal of their platform."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer the question.

Hon Mr Harris: So we listened to the member for Lake Nipigon, sitting behind you.

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Mr Hampton: I notice that the Premier did not go into the rest of the quote, because the rest of the quote shows that it is in fact the presidents of the Bank of Commerce, the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Nova Scotia who are each going to get a \$162,000 tax break from your government while health care is being cut, while child care is being cut, while education is being cut, while seniors are paying new user fees. Remember that term, Premier? User fees, new taxes on seniors. That's the reality of what's going on here.

I say to you again, Premier, do you understand that the reason people are being pushed into the street to protest your government is because they're opposed to cuts to health care, they're opposed to cuts to education, they're opposed to cuts to seniors and to children and they're opposed to you giving your wealthy bank presidents a \$162,000-a-year tax break at the expense of all those people. Do you understand that now?

Hon Mr Harris: The member clearly misspoke himself when he said we are cutting health care when he knows and everybody in this House knows we have actually increased health, not cut one cent. In fact, we've increased health care spending by \$300 million. So off the top, let me correct the record and put the \$300 million of brand-new health care spending on the record.

This is the kind of health care spending that has led to new breast screenings to quadruple the program over the next four years, the kind of increased health care spending that has led to substantial new jobs for nurses in community care all across the province, the kind of spending that has led to new MRIs in hospital after hospital across the province. So I know that the member would want to see the record corrected there.

I want to say that I have listened to a lot of people. Those in this province who are earning less than \$14,900 a year are getting a 41% tax cut so I assume they're celebrating that.

Mr Hampton: The Premier changes the accounting method from a cash accounting method to an accrual accounting method and then says to people, "See, we're spending more on health care." Premier, you're fooling no one. When thousands of nurses out there are being laid off, when hospitals are being closed, when seniors are paying \$200 and \$300 a year for their prescription medicine, when people are being forced out on the street because they can't pay their rent, you're fooling no one.

I want to read a list of some of the people who are going to be out there over the next two days: the Union of Injured Workers, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Toronto Coalition Against Racism, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the Social Planning Council, the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, the Feder-

ation of Metro Tenants' Associations, the Co-Operative Housing Federation of Toronto, the Elizabeth Fry Society, Low Income Families Together, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations —

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: — the Scarborough Coalition for Social Justice, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Salvation Army. They're all going to be out there in the street registering their protest against you. Yes, your wealthy friends will be holed up in hotel rooms and attending your convention.

Do you understand how much you are polarizing society? Do you understand how much you're taking from ordinary people in order to redistribute income to the wealthy —

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm quite surprised that the leader of the third party would want to remind all Ontarians of the two sets of books that your party, your Minister of Finance and your government had, and to criticize us for doing exactly what the auditor asked us to do. We just received plaudits from the auditor for moving to accrual accounting, to having one set of books. With that one set of books everybody can clearly — and every auditor and every financial person who can read books has acknowledged health care funding is \$300 million more than the \$17.4 billion.

I assure all those who are inside this Legislature, who will be making any kind of statement of concern tomorrow or Saturday, that this will be a far kinder, gentler and better Ontario for them and their children than was left by the abysmal record of the New Democratic Party.

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Finance in his capacity as chair of the cabinet committee on privatization.

I met this morning — he is in the gallery this afternoon — Mr Neil Fishpool, who is chair of the National Campaign Water Justice, which is a British consumer group founded in 1992 in response to Great Britain's rather disastrous experiment with water privatization there. He's here to talk to us about what happened in Great Britain when they privatized their water supply.

The Minister of Environment and Energy's declaration last week that he's keen to sell off the Ontario Clean Water Agency has a great number of people in this province very nervous about your intentions. We know that in Great Britain privatization did not bring down prices. As a matter of fact, prices increased by 25% above the rate of inflation the first five years after privatization. Why in the world would you even consider this reckless policy?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I say to the member for Nickel Belt that we do not have any preconceived notions about privatizations on this side of the House.

There may be many candidates for privatization that this government looks at over the next few months, but I can assure him that the only reason we will privatize anything is because it will provide better service to the people of Ontario at a more efficient cost. That is the

only basis upon which any type of privatization makes sense.

I understand what he says about some other governments. I'm not going to comment on what they did, but that's how we plan on proceeding.

Mr Laughren: The minister's comments sound very discouragingly like what was said to the people in Great Britain before they privatized their service. We take very little comfort in that. At the municipal level we've had one example, in Hamilton-Wentworth, of Philip Environmental, who spilled 40 million gallons of sewage into the harbour.

I appreciate the fact that you have made no final determination. I believe you and take you at your word in that regard. As you are even thinking about it, and even that is beyond belief, I remind you that in Great Britain profits increased by 70% in the five years I mentioned while operating costs went up only 9% and executive salaries went right through the roof. As a matter of fact, and this should give you some cause for concern, in Yorkshire the staff were told not to wear their uniforms because of the fear of attack by irate consumers.

Why are you even considering this and why is it on any burner, front or back?

Hon Mr Eves: We are approaching this, as I've said to him on a couple of occasions, with an open mind. We are going to look at many candidates for privatization, but we hope to learn from the mistakes of other jurisdictions, and I think he rightly points out some problems other jurisdictions have had with respect to particular privatization initiatives.

We are not doing it for ideological reasons, as has been done in some other jurisdictions. We are doing it because it makes sense and provides better service at a more efficient rate to the people of Ontario.

Mr Laughren: Given that response from the minister, may I assume that before you take one further step down that crazy road, you will hold public hearings before any decision is made so that the people of this province can be told about the problems associated with the privatization of water in other jurisdictions? Will you at least make that commitment? I can tell you, your Minister of Environment and Energy is causing a lot of concern out there with his rather clear declaration that there is going to be privatization of the Ontario Clean Water Agency and the fact that you've appointed a minister for privatization. Will you make that commitment, that you will hold public hearings before any steps are taken down that road of privatization?

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Hon Mr Eves: To the honourable member, depending on what candidate is or is not accepted or rejected for even looking at privatization, there may well indeed be in certain cases a need to consult, obviously, with the people of the province of Ontario before we actually take the step of privatizing a particular initiative. But being a former member of the executive council, he knows full well that cabinet committees and cabinet don't usually hold public hearings before they decide particular issues that are being decided in that committee or in that cabinet deliberation. His government didn't do it, their government didn't do it, and that isn't the way our government operates.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a question for the Attorney General. Following your smug response to my leader on the family support plan, let me point out to you an example of one of my constituents, Mr Tom McGurk.

Mr McGurk works 12 hours a day in a factory in Burlington. Last October, Mr McGurk and his wife separated. They reached an agreement where \$500 a month was deducted from Mr McGurk's paycheque and directly sent into the account. That worked well.

On August 2, Mr McGurk's wife passed away. He gained custody of the child. Mr McGurk attempted numerous times to contact your ministry to inform them of this. He contacted my office. We faxed your ministry the death certificate, the will that had been left. For the past three months, Mr McGurk has had \$500 a month deducted out of his pay and it has gone to an account in his ex-wife's name, an account that has been closed for three months.

To add insult to injury, Mr McGurk as well —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question, please.

Mr Agostino: — has just received a notice telling him he's in arrears. Can you explain to me how this incompetent, inept mismanagement of a case can occur in your ministry?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member refers to an article that was in the Hamilton Spectator today. I note that the writer of that article wrote that complaints about the phone system are chronic. I think she went on to say that in her 10 years of writing columns on the social beat, she's never had more complaints about anything than the family support plan, and that family support plan complaints over those 10 years have been legion.

I apologize to this particular individual, but these kinds of problems and the problem that is being written about today and the problem that this writer has been writing about over the course of 10 years are nothing new with the family support plan. That is precisely why we are reorganizing the plan, so that this recurring problem can stop taking place and we can solve the problem once and for all by setting up a modern operation with proper technology to deal with our clients.

Mr Agostino: I'm absolutely amazed at the smugness and the arrogance of this minister. I was not asking you about the last 10 years. Can you not be compassionate enough and understanding enough to deal with the specific case of my constituent who is hurting?

This has occurred as a result of the changes your ministry has brought into place. Everything was fine before. You sitting here and telling him it has been 10 years of the problem does not help Mr McGurk. This is a total screw-up that has occurred here. Let me tell you, we became involved. We faxed your office the background material; we faxed your office the information. There have been 70 requests into my constituency office over the last couple of months; 56 have not been responded to. Fifty-six out of 70 is not a very good track record; it doesn't matter where you look at it.

Minister, I ask you again, can you tell me specifically what you are going to do to help my constituent and the other individuals who have come into our office with this problem? Please do not give me a political answer; give me specifics on how you're going to deal with this total mismanagement and incompetent dealing of my constituent's case.

Hon Mr Harnick: I think it would be quite improper to deal with any specific case in the Legislature of Ontario and on the floor of the Legislature. But certainly I have indicated to members that if there are problems, we will deal with them. That is what we have been doing. There are presently 210 outstanding problems among members of the Legislature. That's less than two per constituency. So we are dealing with those. We are trying to respond to the problems that individuals continue to have with the family support plan, as they've had for many, many years.

I remind the member that under the Liberal government, 70% of payors never even paid the family support plan. That's not good enough for us.

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy and is about his government's plans to sell off our water. Mr Fishpool from Britain and Sarah Miller from the Canadian Environmental Law Association are in the gallery today. They say a selloff of our water would be bad not just for consumers but for the environment. In the six years since privatization, there have been over 250 prosecutions of British water companies for pollution violations, and many serious health problems.

Minister, you are planning privatization at the same time as you are gutting your ministry. How can you police this industry that has run rampant over Britain's environment at the same time you cut your ministry by over a third and are gutting environmental standards?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): The member well knows that municipalities themselves are primarily responsible for their water quality and for sewage treatment in this province. They are charged in legislation to take samples to ensure that the citizens of their particular communities have proper drinking water and have proper sewage facilities. My ministry oversees that that is taking place.

Whether or not an operator is a municipal employee, an OCWA employee or someone else doesn't take away from the standards we set nor the monitoring that we do in these plants. So your question is really irrelevant with respect to the quality of water and the system we have in the province of Ontario to ensure that the citizens of Ontario have clean water and proper sewage systems.

Ms Churley: That was not an answer to my question, but let me say to you that you have cut off the municipal assistance program. The municipalities already can't do the job, and it's going to get worse. Our whole system is in a mess.

At the same time, York region has awarded a 35-year, \$500-million water contract to Northwest Water, one of Britain's robber barons of water — bad reputation,

Minister. They're looking at pumping large amounts of water from Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe. Your environmental assessment amendments will probably mean that projects of this sort aren't required to look at alternatives like conservation or need.

Will you show your good faith today, unlike the finance minister, and agree to the request of the Canadian Environmental Law Association that York region and Northwest Water's proposal be bumped up to a full environmental assessment with full public hearings?

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm glad the member clarified that it is York region that has engaged this particular company to supply water to their community. It is not a provincial decision. It is our role to ensure that the standards are in place, and we will continue to do that. We will have the highest standards possible in this province, and we will continue to do that.

I cannot answer whether I will have one kind of environmental assessment until I see the facts. I don't think any member of this Legislature would want me to make a decision on the basis of not having the information in front of me, not having my staff advise me as to what that information is, and then of course I will take a reasoned and logical decision, which that information leads me to.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is to the Minister of Finance. This week, from October 21 to 25, is National Small Business Week. This special week recognizes the achievements of businesses which employ fewer than 100 people in their organizations.

Minister, I know I speak for all the House in stating how important a contribution this sector is making towards the economic growth and recovery of our province. Indeed, this sector accounts for 98% of all businesses in Ontario and is responsible for creating 87% of today's net new employment.

My question to you relates to the national jobs report released today by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Do you have any comments about the report and what action has been taken to date to improve the climate for small business in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): As members may well know, today the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released its report called *On Higher Ground*. As you know, it's primarily made up of the small business community in this country.

They indicate that they would like payroll taxes reduced, which would lead to hiring new people. That's the conclusion of 51% of the small business people survey. Obviously people in this province know that we are eliminating the employer health tax on small businesses with payrolls under \$400,000 a year, and by 1999, 270,000 businesses in Ontario will no longer have to pay that. We are reducing, on average, WCB premiums by some 5%.

Forty per cent indicated that a reduction in taxation levels to consumers would lead to their hiring more

people in the small business sector. People in the Legislature know, whether they agree or not, that we have started our reduction of provincial income tax, on average, in excess of 30% by the time it's fully implemented in three years' time.

We are taking action to reduce government spending, we're reducing government administration costs by 33% over the next three years and we're eliminating red tape.

Mr Chudleigh: Minister, I thank you for your answer. With respect to the findings in the report, it specifically concludes that payroll taxes kill jobs. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business called for a decrease in employment insurance premiums to stimulate job creation across Canada. What is Ontario's position on this issue?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): How did you stimulate the wealthy?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member opposite may think it's funny that small businesses create 98% of the jobs. He may refer to them as wealthy. I'm sure many small business people don't consider themselves wealthy.

While proposing to raise Canada pension plan premiums, the federal government has steadfastly refused to consider a reduction in UI, or EI, premiums, this despite the fact that the federal government, by the end of this year, will have accumulated a surplus in its UI account of some \$5 billion to \$6 billion, \$4 billion of which comes out of the pockets of taxpayers in Ontario, representing a surplus they, as employees, have paid in terms of premiums versus what they took out, a \$4-billion surplus from the province of Ontario alone.

This surplus will continue to accumulate by \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year for the foreseeable future, hitting \$20 billion by the end of 1999. CFIB estimates this will cost 82,000 to 100,000 jobs in Canada. They are both payroll taxes. If they're going to raise one on one hand, they should be lowering the other one.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): My question is for the Premier. It has to do with the hospital restructuring plans for Ottawa-Carleton.

Premier, you're aware that there's a 30-day response time to the interim directive to be issued by the commission. Based on the track record to date of the commission, we in Ottawa-Carleton anticipate that its report will be submitted in mid-December. Our concern is quite simply this: If this occurs, the 30-day consultation period will encompass the period between December 24 and January 2, a 10-day period when, as I'm sure the Premier will acknowledge, it's pretty darned hard to get anything done.

If we're going to have a genuine consultation period, it cannot include that period. What I'm asking for, and I think this is eminently reasonable, is your assurance that the 30-day consultation period to be afforded to the community of Ottawa-Carleton will not encompass the time period between December 24 and January 2.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me first of all say that it sounds like a very reasonable request. The minister is not here today, as you are aware. I know we're dealing with a member who's been very supportive

of our reductions and getting our costs under control and who has expressed that viewpoint on many occasions and understands that very difficult choices have to be made; would that all members of your party or of the opposition understood that. I apologize if this affects any events that take place in any leadership bids, but I think you have demonstrated a considerable amount of common sense on a number of issues.

We'll certainly take it under advisement. In talking with the government House leader, it sounds like we may be sitting right through all of those days, through Christmas and January, perhaps February and March as well.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: It's a reasonable request and we'll certainly take that under advisement if and when the timing should be along that —

The Speaker: Answered.

Mr McGuinty: I want to thank you for your support, Mr Premier; thanks, but no thanks.

I want to raise an additional matter. Some residents of Ottawa-Carleton have reported that they have been polled on the subject of restructuring our hospitals and that there's some reason to believe the poll was conducted by your government. Can the Premier advise as to whether or not a poll has been conducted and, if a poll was taken, provide us with a copy of those results?

Hon Mr Harris: Also a very reasonable request. I am not aware of any poll that is taking place or that we are doing or that the ministry is doing or that the party is doing, but I would be pleased to check for the member. If it is a poll that I or our party or government has any knowledge of, I will check that. If it is a poll that is being paid for by the taxpayers, or at least our taxpayers, we would certainly want to make sure that we share that with the member.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Attorney General. We've talked to you a number of times about problems around the family support plan from clients' points of view, all of which are problems that were not historical, that only happened when you made your changes in August of this year. Now I'm beginning to receive all sorts of phone calls from lawyers who are also experiencing problems that are new since you made your changes.

Since you closed the regional office in London, for example, it's been practically impossible for lawyers to get through on phone lines and to make the kind of arrangements they typically could do under the plan before. Iva Humble, who is a lawyer from London, called to say that when the regional office was open and staffed, she could request and receive a director's statement of arrears within two days. She did that regularly. Now she's been told it'll take two weeks at a minimum. As a lawyer, she requires the director's statement of arrears to serve the notice to the other party. This is a problem that you created, a problem that didn't exist prior to the close of the regional offices and the layoff of staff. Are you aware of this problem? What are you going to do about it?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): This is a plan that has constantly had problems. People have not been able to access this plan. We've had days where the plan gets 50,000 phone calls a day. We had a Liberal government where 70% of the people who had orders against them to pay didn't pay anything. We had an NDP government that allowed arrears to go from \$300 million to \$900 million. We are reorganizing this plan and we intend within the very near future to have our new centre open so that we will have better service to clients of the plan and better service to lawyers, who have never had good service from the plan. We intend to deal with client complaints and client questions, ensuring proper enforcement. The plan has had 10 years of problems, the plan has never been well run, and we are going to change that historical situation.

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Mrs Boyd: At some point this minister is going to recognize that everyone in this House and all lawyers in the province understand there have been historical problems with the plan. What they're mad about is that this minister stepped in and ruined what was working in the system and has not put into place what he promised.

Let me give you another example of the problem that has happened since you made your changes in August, not before; a problem that was not a problem before August. Lawyers for recipients and payors were able to talk directly to the lawyers working with the plan. They had the phone numbers. They could call the lawyers who had the case histories and get answers. Now they have no numbers except the general public number. When they call they go through what the general public goes through. When they finally get the voice mail, it takes them four tries to leave a message that allows them to give the amount of information they need. You allow so few seconds for a message, they can't even get their message through. This is a new problem and you've created it. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Harnick: These are not new problems. Clients have not been able to access the plan for 10 years.

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I know you just want to wait, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't know about that, actually. Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: The fact is that lawyers have not been able to access the plan and the public has not been able to access the plan. Having been in this Legislature for the last six years, I have had constant complaints about the family support plan, more than any other social program the government delivers. This is not new. I've looked at all of the complaints that have come in. These are the kinds of complaints that have been repetitive with the plan for years and years.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for London Centre, I ask that you withdraw that, please.

Mrs Boyd: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre as well, would you please withdraw.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Kenora.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Premier. You made a commitment to the people of northwestern Ontario, particularly the people of Dryden, that not one cent would come out of health care. After saying this, we find out from the Minister of Health —

Interjection.

The Speaker: I understand, but I made a mistake and I will fix my mistake.

Mr Pouliot: Don't be too hard on yourself. You didn't make a mistake. You're too hard on yourself. You were perfect.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, you can continue to heckle; I'll wait. I made a mistake; I'm going to fix my mistake. Let's go to the rotation. The member for Hamilton West.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was up on my feet.

My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. This summer your ministry issued a consultation paper, entitled Responsive Environmental Protection, which outlined proposed reforms to many of Ontario's outdated environmental regulations. I understand that the deadline for public submissions in response to this paper has recently passed. Could you please enlighten us and tell us what the status of that project is now?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I do recognize the member for Hamilton West's problem in being seen by the Speaker from time to time.

The consultation paper Responsive Environmental Protection was released after nine months of consultation with the industry, municipalities and other groups across this province. In fact, the consultation started before our government came to power. We have taken the work of the previous government, those consultations, and put forward this tremendous paper on 80 different regulations. We've distributed over 5,000 copies to various people across the province. To date we've received over 300 submissions on the various different regulations, which shows the tremendous interest in the environment by groups, municipalities, businesses. Interestingly enough, 150, or half of those, are from individual citizens and I congratulate all of those citizens for putting forward those proposals.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: I would like to assure the people of Ontario when we come to a final conclusion on these regulations we will have better regulations than we had in the province before and no regulation —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Ross: I'd like to ask the minister if there will be any other further consultations with interested parties and stakeholders.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm pleased to inform the honourable member that prior to the paper being produced, over 80 groups had met with ministry staff and with my parliamentary assistant, Dr Doug Galt. What we're planning to do in the next stage of consultations is to go to the groups which have requested a meeting with the ministry. My parliamentary assistant, Dr Doug Galt, who has led this project from the beginning, is going to meet with those on an individual basis before we go to the next step of consultations. There will be additional chances, as you know, under the environmental registry system. Before we go to the final step of actually altering the regulations, we will of course have a notice period and another period of time for the public to consult and respond to our formal and final recommendations with regard to this matter.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): Premier, you made a commitment to the people in northwestern Ontario, and in particular to the people of Dryden, that not one cent would come out of health care. Premier, after saying this we find out that the Ministry of Health capital funding formula has been reduced from 83% to 75%. This will have a devastating effect on the Dryden hospital redevelopment plans. Premier, why are you asking small and rural communities to pick up costs that have traditionally been the responsibility of the provincial government, costs that you said would not be there? Remember, Premier, "not one cent."

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I assume the reference to "not one cent" is our firm commitment made during the campaign and repeated day after day, and I'm happy to repeat it today. We will not cut one cent from the health care ministry. In fact, we of course, as you very well know, have added \$300 million to the health care budgets and to the ministry. This is what has allowed us to help small rural northern Ontario hospitals. We've been giving them up to \$20 million to fund a \$70-an-hour session fee for working nights so that we can have emergency care, something the former government wasn't able to provide in many of our communities.

As you know, \$194,000 a year for 34 positions in 21 small remote northern communities to provide doctors and services in these communities —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: — to help recruitment. I'm sure the member wants to congratulate us for all we have done for northern Ontario, for remote communities by way of the additional \$300 million —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

1500

Mr Mclash: Premier, I'm talking about the Dryden hospital capital funding. The formula has been reduced from 83% to 75%. The hospital board and the community have worked hard to put together this redevelopment plan. Your government has now put it in jeopardy. I'm talking about Dryden. I'm talking about their redevelopment plans. What do you have to say to the people of Dryden who worked so hard for this redevelopment?

Hon Mr Harris: We're happy to work with the people of Dryden. I know that the majority of them have been

very supportive, as has most of northern Ontario, in the directions that we've been taking, restoring, for example, the \$60 million plus \$5 million of interest that the NDP stole from the northern development fund and different ways that we can —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: It is moves like this that have enabled us to provide substantially more dollars, not only for economic development but directly for health care. In Dryden, many have benefited from a number of the reinvestments that we have made directly providing services to northwestern Ontario. I know there's overall support for that, and if there is specific help you would like personally, the people of Dryden, from the Premier of Ontario —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: — then I personally would be delighted to assist with their capital plans any way I can, and, I might add, as the federal Liberal members unfortunately —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Finance in his role as chair of the cabinet committee on privatization.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Is this about the \$60 million you took out of the northern Ontario heritage fund?

Mr Laughren: No. No cheap shots today. Yesterday in the standing committee on estimates, the member for Wilson Heights was pursuing the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on the question of privatization of VLTs, when video lottery terminals are introduced into the province of Ontario. When the member for Wilson Heights asked the question if it was possible that it would be the private sector that would be running and operating the VLTs, Mr Saunderson replied: "I suppose that's possible. I've been reminded by the deputy of the context of the Criminal Code. To the extent that the Criminal Code would allow that, it's very possible that there could be other people involved."

I ask the minister responsible for privatization in this government, are you seriously considering the privatization of these gambling machines, and even, at least as seriously, are you considering the privatization of the Ontario Lottery Corp?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, the minister isn't here, as you well know. I understand that. He's the one who made the statement in committee yesterday, not me. We have not made any deliberation with respect to the operation of VLTs in the province of Ontario. It has not come before us and no decisions have been made.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Do you understand the contribution that the Ontario Lottery Corp makes to the communities of Sault Ste Marie and Algoma? You've already reduced its budget by \$35 million and your Minister of Economic Development and Trade said yesterday that you are undertaking an indepen-

dent review of that corporation, and your backbenchers, your colleagues in cabinet, are musing about the competitive nature of that industry and its business practices. Minister, this is making the people of Sault Ste Marie really nervous and uncomfortable. Given the Criminal Code concerns re this piece of business and the economic impact this has on my community, will you today categorically go on the record to say you're not going to privatize the Ontario Lottery Corp?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm not going to categorically say we are or are not doing anything today. As the member knows, every single minister in this government has been asked to review every single undertaking, program and operation in his or her ministry. If that's what the minister's alluding to, that's not unusual; it's part of the normal course of business in reducing administrative costs in government.

If and when this minister or any other minister has such a proposal to bring before cabinet I presume he or she will do so in the appropriate fashion. I can assure you, just as I said to the member for Nickel Belt a few moments ago, that absolutely no decisions have been made in this area and we will consider proposals as they're brought forward by our cabinet colleagues to the cabinet table.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I've got approximately another thousand signatures with regard to the following petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two" acute care "hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of health care and our local Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two" acute care "Sudbury hospitals."

I affix my signature to this petition — we number about 10,000 now — because I agree with it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive petitions from workers concerned about this government's anti-worker legislation, specifically around WCB and occupational health and safety. These petitions come from the Canadian Union of Public

Employees, Local 2936, Oshawa; Local 1206 and Local 1206-01, Cobourg; CUPE in Ottawa; and Local 2951 in Haileybury. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

Our caucus continues to support these petitioners, and therefore I add my name to theirs.

1510

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 42% of all driving fatalities are alcohol-related;

"Whereas 565 persons died in alcohol-related crashes in Ontario in 1993, the most recent year for which statistics are available, and more than 26,000 drivers were charged with impaired driving in the same year;

"Whereas 63% of the total convictions for drunk driving in 1993 involved repeat offenders" —

Mr Speaker, I don't think anybody can hear this petition. There is so much noise going on in this House.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): To the member for Mississauga South, with all due respect, petitions — and I try to keep order during the time — can become a little difficult. I ask everyone to bear in mind that people are reading petitions that are very important to their communities; give them a little bit of indulgence, please.

Mrs Marland: Thank you.

"Whereas 63% of the total convictions for drunk driving in 1993 involved repeat offenders;

"Whereas every year, drinking and driving costs Ontarians \$1.3 billion in personal financial loss, medical expenses and property damage;

"Whereas the existing measures and penalties have failed to deter chronic impaired drivers from re-offending;

"Whereas driving is a privilege, not a right, and chronic impaired drivers have failed to take their driving responsibilities seriously;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact Margaret Marland's private member's bill, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act (Impaired Driving) 1996," Bill 85, "or similar legislation, as soon as possible."

I appreciate this petition and the support and I lend my signature to it.

TAX REDUCTION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

This is signed by a number of my constituents in Thunder Bay and I have affixed my own signature as I am in full support.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from the members of United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 326-W.

"To the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour, and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to the proposed changes to workers' compensation in Ontario, including the elimination of the current bipartite board of directors; the reduction of temporary benefits from 90% to 85%; the introduction of an unpaid waiting period for compensation benefits; legislated limits on entitlement, including repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is a legal obligation that the employers of this province have to workers in Ontario;

"We demand no reduction in existing" —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. We are reading petitions. I say to the member for Mississauga South, we are reading petitions, and I think it's important that everyone hear those petitions. Thank you.

Mr Christopherson: Mr Speaker, I appreciate the fairness of your chairing. I should start again, but in fairness to you I won't. I will, however, pick up with:

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is a legal obligation that the employers of this province have to workers in Ontario;

"We demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent accidents, no reduction in current staff levels at the WCB and continued support for the bipartite board structure."

I add my name to theirs in support.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'd like to present some cards, in petition form, on behalf of the public libraries in my region. The cards are asking to maintain a provincial role in small community library funding, and

they're signed by Christian and Erin Hesser, two who live in my old house on Lindberg Drive; Janet Doane, my old teacher; and Frank Bean from Stevensville, Ontario.

I proudly submit these cards to the assembly.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): This is a petition by seniors concerned about the user fees on prescription fees.

"Whereas the government of Mike Harris has broken its pre-election promise not to impose user fees on health care;

"Whereas the user fee imposed by the Harris government on prescription drugs is causing low-income seniors grave hardship;

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors have worked very hard and have paid taxes for decades;

"Whereas seniors are most concerned that this will be the beginning of more and more user fees on health care;

"We, the undersigned, totally oppose the Mike Harris prescription user fees for seniors and petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Mike Harris government place a moratorium on all health care user fees for seniors."

I fix my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet another petition from the people who gathered last Thursday to protest the Premier when he was in Timmins.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has broken its election promise by slashing millions of dollars from the health care budgets; and

"Whereas northern Ontario will lose at least five hospitals as a result of these funding cuts; and

"Whereas for the ill the result will be longer waiting periods for care or possibly travelling hundreds of miles to other hospitals, taking them away from families and loved ones; and

"Whereas for employees, the results will be relocations, creating turmoil in their lives, and layoffs, which will drive the economy to the lowest level;

"We, therefore, demand the Premier keep his election promise and return dollars to the health care budgets."

It's signed by some 150 citizens from the community of Timmins and I affix my signature to that petition.

SALE OF AMMUNITION

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): These petitions concerning ammunition regulations, which are supported and are being distributed by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, read as follows:

"Whereas the NDP government under former Premier Bob Rae passed legislation, Bill 181, the Ammunition Regulation Act, which placed restrictions on the sale of ammunition in Ontario;

"Whereas the provisions contained in Bill 181 are time-consuming, onerous and create unnecessary red tape;

"Whereas the records produced as a result of the provisions of Bill 181 cannot be reasonably used to track criminals and are on many occasions across Ontario, where such records are kept, insecurely stored and thus available for criminal use as a shopping list of homes with firearms;

"Whereas Bill 181 was passed without any discussion with law-abiding gun owners such as farmers, collectors, hunters and recreational shooters, those who are most affected by the legislation; and

"Whereas Bill 181 will do nothing to combat the illegal use of ammunition;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to repeal the Ammunition Regulation Act, protect the rights of responsible firearms owners and work for tougher penalties against those who criminally misuse firearms and ammunition."

I affix my signature to this.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition of 312 signatures that were obtained in one afternoon in 14 different doctors' offices, signed by patients.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario re cuts in health care:

"Patient care is in jeopardy as a result of a crisis in our health care system due to underfunding and cutbacks. Doctors are asking for common sense to prevail with the government and are calling for the level of funding to match the level of care.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario stop cutbacks and underfunding of the health care system and match the level of funding to the level of care Ontarians need."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition sent to me by Ted Mansell, occupational health and safety coordinator, and Ken Brown, international vice-president of the Service Employees International Union on behalf of their members, signed by a number of their members. It reads:

"To Premier Harris and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, oppose any attempts to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"We, therefore, demand education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I affix my name with theirs.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have a petition to deliver on behalf of the member for Don Mills. I invite the members present to join me in reading this in unison. It is entitled, "A Petition to End the Spring Bear Hunt," addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

1520

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition signed by a number of Ontario and St Catharines residents. It reads as follows:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gamb-

ling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): J'ai ici une pétition signée par environ 700 individus de la communauté de Timmins qui ont rencontré M. Harris quand il est venu ici à Timmins il y a deux semaines. La pétition se lit comme suit :

«Les enfants sont le seul avenir de la race humaine ; formons-les convenablement. Étant donné que l'avenir repose sur le développement sain de nos enfants, accordons la priorité aux enfants dans les décisions, les politiques, les programmes et les dépenses à caractère économique, social et politique.

«Nous voulons continuer à leur offrir des services de garde axés sur la qualité. Or, nous savons que la formation appropriée en éducation de la petite enfance est directement liée au niveau de la qualité.

«Nous demandons donc au gouvernement de ne pas diminuer les normes de qualité que nous avons présentement dans nos centres de garde.»

J'appose ma signature à cette pétition.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, if I could, although there are still discussions going on in terms of the weekly business statement at this time, pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of October 28, 1996.

On Monday, October 28, the House will consider Bill 75. The business of the House for the remaining days is yet to be determined, although discussions are taking place, I guess, as we speak. That's the status at this point.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Mr Eves moved government notice of motion number 10:

That the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing November 1, 1996, and ending April 30, 1997, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Does this include MPPs?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Does the minister care to make a statement?

Hon Mr Eves: A very brief one, Mr Speaker. I am pleased to put forward this motion for interim supply. As most members of the Legislature are aware, the motion for interim supply provides the government with the authority to make payments to hospitals, school boards,

municipalities, suppliers, civil servants and others. These payments are currently being made under the authority of a motion for interim supply which came into effect on May 1 of this year, 1996.

The motion for interim supply is required now as the authority under the existing motion expires on October 31, 1996, and payments cannot be made after that date. To ensure that all payments scheduled on or after November 1 are made on time to all parts of the province, including northern Ontario, it is necessary to provide the banking system with some lead time. The practice has been to give them at least five working days to ensure that all payments are received on time.

Scheduled payments in early November include, among others, payments for general welfare and transfers to hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies. To ensure that the province meets its obligations in an orderly fashion, I hope all members will be supportive in ensuring this motion is passed promptly.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): By way of comment to the Minister of Finance, it's obviously a motion that needs to be put forward. Without this motion, people in the province of Ontario who work for the minister directly and indirectly, who are employed by the province of Ontario, would not have their paycheques issued.

But I can't allow this moment to go by without making the following comment about a number of other people in Ontario who are already unemployed as a result of the cuts of the Minister of Finance which have resulted since his taking office.

I note that the minister and others within the Conservative government take great pride in pointing out by how many people they've reduced the civil service within the province of Ontario, but I just want to bring to the minister directly what it means to communities like Matheson and Cochrane and others in and around Cochrane South and Cochrane North when those services that are being offered by those ministry employees, such as the Ministry of Ag and Food office that we used to have in Matheson or the Ministry of Transportation office that we used to have in Matheson are no longer there. The Ministry of Natural Resources that used to exist at Matheson is no longer there. It means that all those stakeholders who used to have access to the government's policies and the government's programs no longer can do them in their home communities.

For people in Matheson, that's a big problem because they happen to be at least more than hour's drive from major centres such as Timmins or Kirkland Lake that may have other ministry offices, not to speak to what that means to the local community. It means entrepreneurs in the Matheson area, when wanting to deal with the Ministry of Natural Resources, no longer quite have the incentive they used to have to locate in Matheson, because it would be easier for them to do business in Timmins. I say that's bad for Matheson and that's not how Timmins, knowing Mayor Vic Power and others, wants to see economic development happen.

So I say to the minister that it is good that we pass this motion, but we shouldn't forget what has been done up

to this point to the communities of Matheson and Cochrane and many other communities across Ontario as a result of your policies.

Mr Bradley: I want to note that the minister is able to get the borrowing powers from this Legislature and will have the funds to do it without even having video lottery terminals in place in Ontario. I believe that is a lesson for the Minister of Finance, who I know has been a long-time opponent of placing video lottery terminals in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in this province.

The opposition is acquiescent to this resolution before the House, to this supply bill before the House, because we recognize there's a need to pay the bills, the obligations the government has. I note that the present taxation powers of the province allow the Treasurer to meet that, except there is a problem arising in that as he gives his tax break, a 30% cut in income tax, which benefits largely the richest people in this province, he's going to have less money to be able to pay the bills he is asking to pay this afternoon. As a result, some of his colleagues have persuaded him perhaps, or at least ordered him, to acquiesce to video lottery terminals being placed in everybody's neighbourhood, preying upon the most vulnerable people in our society, the most desperate people in our society, those who are addicted to gambling, those who see this as their only chance to be able to acquire some wealth in a relatively short period of time.

I hope that the minister, when he's reflecting upon these estimates, will ask his colleagues to withdraw the bill that permits video lottery terminals and that he will rethink his tax cut, which of course is very popular with bank presidents and corporation presidents, who will get the largest break from it, and that we will be able then to pay the bills and meet the deficit requirements of this province by eliminating that deficit in a period of time before the government contemplates as of now.

1530

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to add to the comments of my caucus colleague from Cochrane South when he speaks to the fact that there's some — I have to use a parliamentary term and I'll stay within those rules — irony at the very least that the minister expresses a need to get on with paying the public servants, the people who work for the citizens of Ontario, and leaves the impression that this is something he's quite eager to do.

The reality is that with their plans to privatize and get rid of 12,000 of those very people he claims to care about, there's also the question of the people who were hurt by one of this government's first announcements: the poorest of the poor in Ontario, who had 22% of their income taken away by this government. Don't we in the NDP wish that this minister had been as quick to call the Legislative Assembly together and put before this Legislature that kind of attack on the poorest of the poor before he went ahead and put them further into poverty, recognizing that over half the people he affected when he did that were children.

I also point out the number of disabled and injured workers who are out there right now, many of whom are probably watching today because they can't get the kind

of rehabilitation they need and can't get back into the jobs they need. This government is going after them and other workers who currently may have a job and who, if they're hurt, will have less to rely on to provide for their families.

That's the agenda of this government in addition to a whole host of other cuts in education, where we're seeing layoffs, and in health care, with nurses who are laid off. Let's remember those people when we hear the pious words of this minister today.

The Acting Speaker: The minister.

Hon Mr Eves: In response to some of my honourable colleagues, I say to the member for Cochrane South that I appreciate his comments. However, I think he should also not lose sight of the fact that today there are 99,000 more people working in the province of Ontario than were working a year ago today. Surely that number is not sufficient, obviously, and never will be probably, but we should not lose sight of that fact.

To the honourable member for St Catharines, I say that there will not be a video lottery terminal in every bar and restaurant in Ontario. He knows full well that we have committed to initially only putting them into racetracks and charity event sites. He also knows full well that even when the next step is taken, if and when it's taken, there will be fewer machines per capita than in any other jurisdiction in Canada. We have committed to that and we will fulfil that.

With respect to his comments on the tax cut, he will also know that for those individuals earning less than \$15,000 a year, \$14,900 or less, their tax cut comes out to in excess of 41% of provincial income tax. He will also know that for those at the upper end of the wage scale, those earning more than \$247,500 a year, their tax reduction will only be 17.9%. We think that is a very progressive way of implementing the tax cut. It was done that way on purpose so those of more modest and medium incomes would receive a much better percentage break than those at the upper end of the income scale.

I would say to the member for Hamilton Centre that these payments, as he knows, no matter who's been in government, are a matter of course and procedure in this Legislature. But just to give you an example, in the next few days alone, payments to general welfare assistance, \$98.5 million; to nursing homes, \$112.1 million; to boards of education, \$182.6 million.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, I wonder if I might have unanimous consent to split my 90-minute time in the House with Mr Conway, the member for Renfrew North.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that, thank you.

I want to begin the debate on what we here call supply, which is to ensure that the government has the finances, the money, to pay its bills, by saying that it's part of a financial plan we have a fundamental disagreement with. In politics you can have that. The fundamental disagreement is around the tax cut. I want to articulate for the House and certainly for the people of Ontario why we have that fundamental disagreement.

It's important to remember what the Harris government plans to do: It is a 30% cut in personal income tax. If you're making \$150,000 in this province, you will get \$5,000 more a year in take-home pay. It is an enormous cut in taxes for the well-to-do. The Minister of Finance used some examples. If you're making \$15,000, that is a cut of less than a dollar a week. The people who are making \$150,000 a year will benefit enormously.

I raise this because the people of Ontario understand that we have a fiscal problem to deal with. They're being asked to make enormous sacrifices. The government is cutting 20% of the funding for hospitals over three years. Believe me, that is going to cause, and is causing, chaos in our hospital sector. Frankly, I think it's irresponsible. Hospitals know they have to restructure, but to put a gun to their head and say, "Over three years we are going to cut 20% from your funding," is guaranteed to pit hospital against hospital to make bad health decisions. There is no question of that. It will happen and it is happening.

On the educational front, the government says, "We are not touching the classroom." I will challenge the members of the House to find one school board that has not got larger class sizes in September of this year than it had a year ago. The members may shake their heads, but I would urge them to go and talk to their school boards about the size of the classes.

The minister made reference to jobs. You promised 12,000 jobs a month when you ran. You are now, without question, 80,000 jobs behind that promise. There's no dispute. You put out a document. By the way, this document normally comes out the day the employment stats come out. It was delayed a few days because it had to be, I gather, looked at carefully.

There are 57,000 more people out of work in the province of Ontario right now than there were a year ago. I know there are 99,000 more jobs, but the number of people coming into the labour force is growing far faster than that. You must remember the promise you made. You didn't promise 100,000 jobs a year; you promised 145,000 jobs a year.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): And you must remember the promise you made.

Mr Phillips: The member in the back is barracking. I would just say to him that there are 57,000 more people in Ontario out of work right now than there were a year ago. I hadn't planned to start on this, but your budget, the one you approved, the one your caucus agreed to, this document promises more people out of work in 1998 than there were in 1995. Have you looked at that? Do you understand what you're saying and what you're doing?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): They were unemployed in 1995 too —

Mr Phillips: There's another member saying that they were unemployed in 1995.

Mr Christopherson: But they weren't looking for work, he said.

Mr Phillips: Oh, they weren't looking for work. So they're looking for work now. Is that why there's 57,000 more people out of work? That is no excuse for why there are 57,000 more people. It is because you are not seeing jobs created nearly fast enough in the province, and 57,000 more people are out of work.

I go back to say to the people of Ontario that if the deficit is such a big problem that hospitals have to be cut 20% — you're planning to cut provincial financing for school boards by 25%; that's in your own figures. You have cut municipalities' funding by 25% and you've promised to cut it another 25%. Where I come from, young people are paying higher fees. It's the worst savings you can imagine: forcing young people to pay higher fees in terms of using recreation facilities.

You are forcing municipalities to cut down on their police organizations. You have cut the capital budget absolutely dramatically. You've cut it from \$3.5 billion; it's now \$2.7 billion and it will go to \$2.2 billion, almost cut in half. If you want to see the infrastructure, which is the foundation on which we build many things, crumbling you're doing it. Why is it happening? It is to fund a tax break that without question, the more you make, the bigger the break.

I find it inexplicable to say to someone in my community, "Yes, the government is going to put user fees on drugs for seniors." In fact, there's a threat in my own community that the local Salvation Army hospital, open 10 years, a fantastic hospital, is under threat now. Why? Because you've got to cut 20% from hospital funding. "We have to do all those things to get our fiscal house in order," but at the same time we can afford a tax break, 30%, for the richest people in this province.

1540

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): To create jobs.

Mr Phillips: "To create jobs," the member says. You are wiping out thousands of jobs to fund this tax cut where every economist who looked at it said it is perhaps the least effective tax cut to create jobs. It is just a payoff for the richest people in this province. If you are truly concerned about the finances of this province, I don't understand how we can afford a \$5-billion tax break. I don't understand how the province and the seeming great fiscal managers, which is a complete myth, can afford a \$5-billion tax break.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: To the unemployed people of Ontario I would say there is a Conservative member in the back row, and I will find his name here in a moment, who is barracking and says things are fine. I say things are not fine. I will say tomorrow —

Mr Christopherson: Brant-Haldimand.

Mr Phillips: I don't know what his name is, but Brant-Haldimand. "Things are fine." They're not fine, and you are making them worse with a fiscal plan that is ridiculous.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): Those are your words.

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: At no time did I say that things were fine. I say they're in a mess because we still haven't fixed the problems that have been caused over the past 10 years.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Would the member for Scarborough-Agincourt please continue.

Mr Phillips: The member for Durham East, Mr O'Toole, just so that people at home understand, doesn't like the fact that the people of Ontario have a voice in here.

Mr Preston: I'm not Mr O'Toole.

Mr Phillips: There he goes barracking again. Mr Speaker, you're going to have to try and keep him under control. He's out of control here.

On the employment front we have a crisis on our hands. We have 57,000 more people out of work. If you say everything is fine, we have a fundamental disagreement with you on your fiscal plan, where you say the province of Ontario has a huge deficit problem, and all of us must struggle. In fact, you've broken many promises you made in this Common Sense Revolution. Mr O'Toole from Durham East, where my daughter lives, incidentally, I think you should be a bit embarrassed to be in here barracking.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): That's Mr Preston from Brant-Haldimand.

Mr Phillips: Oh, is it? You said this plan guarantees full funding for education spending in the classroom. You have cut and plan to cut one quarter of your support for education in this province. You said you'd guarantee full funding for health care and you have now cut and promised to cut 20%.

Mr O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member addressed me as barracking while I was in the other room making a phone call, indicating that I was making comments in the House. I would like to correct the record that I was not in the House, that I was not barracking, and I would like him to withdraw those comments. If he's going to make personal attacks on people, he'd better make them in their presence or stand accountable for his comments.

The Acting Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mrs Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is no quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: Mr O'Toole is right. I looked at the wrong name here. It was Mr Preston who was barracking. I apologize to Mr O'Toole. It's Mr Preston who is barracking.

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I complained about being called Mr O'Toole; they denied it.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Phillips: We rely on you to keep him under control.

Just to continue on the promises you all made in the Common Sense Revolution that you've broken, you promised — and for many of the seniors in this province this was a solemn promise — that you would introduce no new user fees and no new copayments on drugs. You've done that. You have broken that promise totally, and the people of Ontario understand that.

Interjection: Where does it say that?

Mr Phillips: There's another member. Where does it say it? It says right here: "In the last decade, user fees

and copayments have kept rising and many health care services have been 'delisted' and are no longer covered by OHIP.... We looked at those kinds of options..." such as fees and copayments, and you rejected them. "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees," and no copayments. I can't use the strong language I would like, but to the people of Ontario, you put a user fee on seniors with drugs. You promised you wouldn't do that and you've done it.

You promised you would not touch the classroom. You have now cut, and promise to cut, 25% of your support for school boards. That's clear.

You promised in this document, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years.... Ontario needs jobs today, and jobs tomorrow." You promised 12,000 jobs a month. You are now 80,000 jobs behind that promise.

Another promise in here was to return the public sector to the appropriate size it was in 1985. That was a promise you made in the Common Sense Revolution. We now find they have changed that promise and they have a completely different promise now than the one they made during the campaign. I will just go through the numbers here.

In 1985 in the province of Ontario there were 81,000 public servants. When you came into office there were 81,000 public servants in the province. In other words, the public sector —

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The government is failing to maintain a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would the clerk please check for a quorum.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I want to go over these numbers, because certainly it was a very successful campaign that Mike Harris ran. It resulted in their election and I take my hat off to them. But we now find a whole bunch of promises that you made frankly you're not keeping. You said in this Common Sense Revolution you were going to return the bloated bureaucracy back to 1985 levels. As it turned out, you didn't know the numbers. The fact is that when you came into office, the Ontario public service was exactly the same size as it was 10 years before.

1550

Interjection

Mr Phillips: One of the Brampton members is again barracking, but I just go on what you said. I assumed that you knew what you were saying. You said you were going to return the bureaucracy to the level that it was in 1985. Now we're finding it's not going to be the level it was in 1985; you want to reduce it to about 10,000 fewer than it was in 1985. If I had confidence that you knew what you were doing and that you knew how to run things, I might feel less worried than I am now, but certainly the things you have touched so far — we spent today talking about the family benefit plan that is in

absolute chaos. It is like a complete case history in mismanagement.

We see now that the government is cutting 10,000 jobs out of the civil service. I will just say that the Provincial Auditor, who is the independent eyes and ears for the people of Ontario, signalled significant concerns about that. He indicated significant concerns in three or four areas. One is in the environment, where the auditor — in fact, I asked the Provincial Auditor, “What is the area we should be most worried about in here?” The auditor said, “It is in the environment.”

The reason I raise this is because I know it was popular to run on, “We’re going to cut the civil servants down dramatically.” That played well, but then when the government got elected, they found out the civil service was exactly the same size in 1995 as it was in 1985. But the government is going to cut 10,000 more out. What does the auditor say about that? The auditor says he has major concerns about the air standards. He uses terms like “carcinogenic,” “very worried about cancer-causing pollutants.” What’s the government’s answer to that? “We certainly would like to handle that, but the ministry has many competing priorities.” In other words, the ministry does not have sufficient staff to deal with the pollutants and the concerns about air pollution that the auditor has raised.

You may remember that similar concerns have been raised about water quality. What does the auditor say about that? The auditor says the ministry had planned to extend the program to about 15 new plants a year. However, citing resource constraints, the ministry has added only 13 plants over the period. The point I’m making is that on the environment, on both water and air, crucial issues for the people of Ontario, the auditor said that’s his number one concern. It was not necessarily reported that way, but that’s what the auditor said. On both water and air, the auditor said we have major problems and the ministry’s response was, “We have limited resources to deal with it.”

There are similar concerns expressed in community and social services. In fact, throughout the community and social services portion of this, they cite the problem with lack of resources. The reason I raise this is that it is in all of our interests to stamp out fraud and abuse in the welfare system. Those who are legitimately on social assistance — and I might add that any study I’ve ever seen of it suggests that well over 95% of the people on social assistance have a total legitimate need for that assistance. They would like it to be handled. But there’s nothing that will give the social assistance area a worse name than the government deciding to shortchange on resources. That will lead to obvious abuse in it and will give the whole system a bad name. So if you want to give the social assistance system a bad name, cut the resources, and you’ll find for sure, as the auditor says, these things will creep in.

Once again the auditor points out the problems. Here’s what the auditor says. They did a study and it said: “A standard caseload of 275 people per case worker is the right level. If you go more than 375, they can’t do their job.” What do we find now? The average file per case worker is 385. The reason I raise this is because I know

you want to cut civil servants. I know that if you want to fund the tax cut you’ve got to cut them. But according to the auditor, you are inviting abuse. I repeat myself: It’s in no one’s best interests, most of all those who legitimately have an entitlement to adequate social assistance.

This is perhaps unfair, but if you wanted to set up a recipe for discrediting social assistance, you would do what you’re doing, which is to cut the case workers, give them an impossible workload, let some abuse slide into the system and then highlight that abuse.

In the months ahead, the auditor has you on notice that you are cutting staff, you do not have adequate resources to deal with the environment, to deal with the whole area of social assistance. He also points it out in the tax area, where he says — this is an interesting number — “For every 14 hours of a tax audit, it yields additional taxes of \$10,000.” Once again you’ve cut staff there. Now the government belatedly has come to the conclusion that it should add staff there.

Why am I going through all this? It is fashionable to say: “Well, we must downsize. We’ve got to do more with less. We’ve got to cut the bloated bureaucracy.” Although the public should be aware that the bloated bureaucracy was exactly the same size in 1995 as it was in 1985, in spite of the fact there was a substantial increase in the number of people in Ontario.

By the way, I might add, in that 10-year period from 1985 to 1995 — and this may be of interest to you. Remember I said earlier that the provincial civil service was 81,000 in 1985 and 81,000 in 1995 — law enforcement went up by 5,000 people over that period of time. What happened in the rest of the budget? Health went down by 1,000; the Ministry of Community and Social Services went down by 2,000. Not only did the numbers stay the same but the law enforcement side grew dramatically and health and community and social services declined dramatically. I know that’s not the public perception, perhaps, but that’s what happened.

Now what you’re doing is you want to cut another 11,000. What the auditor has signalled is that in the areas that he’s looked at — the environment — believe me, he’s sending up a major signal to the province, the people of Ontario: Look out for your air and your water quality. He’s sending up a major signal in the area of social assistance. I repeat, my experience with people on social assistance is that the overwhelming numbers are there legitimately and require it, but if you do not have adequate resources there to manage it, you’re just inviting abuse for the system, and in the tax area.

I might also add as an aside that he raises concerns about Highway 407 and the new government agreeing — I understand the new government signed a new contract for maintenance on it that didn’t go to tender, and he’s saying, “Why did it not go to tender?”

1600

I go back to what we’re debating here, which is the whole issue of the finances of the government’s fiscal plan. I go back to a strong difference of opinion we have with the government, that we think it is fiscally irresponsible to put forward a scheme of a \$5-billion tax cut. By the way, that’s well over 10% of all the tax revenue in

this province. It's huge. It's absolutely a mammoth loss of revenue. Just in the next four years alone, it is \$13 billion of lost revenue because of the tax cut.

I might add that over the next four years this government is going to add \$22 billion to the debt of the province — huge — but at the same time as we're adding that \$22 billion — I might add that \$22 billion is an enormous amount of money for Ontario — that much debt, we can afford to go out and borrow \$13 billion. Every penny of this is borrowed money. We're going to go out and borrow \$13 billion for a tax cut. As I say to my business associates, this is an organization that has a significant deficit problem, but we can afford a \$5-billion-a-year dividend and we'll pay it to our richest shareholders. For most people, it really doesn't make sense.

I've talked to many of the Conservative members and I understand why you're doing it. First and foremost, for many of you it is a way to continue to force government expenditure cuts. If you are fiscally responsible, can you really afford a \$5-billion-a-year tax cut? I will guarantee you, by the way, that as hospitals close, as our school classrooms get larger and larger, as our municipalities find they do not have the resources to maintain the quality of life we're accustomed to, you are going to have real difficulty explaining to those people how at the same time you can afford a \$5,000-a-year tax break for someone making \$150,000 a year.

I was interested in the report this week from *Fortune* magazine where they ranked cities outside the US and ranked Toronto as I think the most livable, and one of the Conservative members go up and tried to take credit for that. Frankly, it's absurd for the new Conservative government to try to take credit for that. It is a history of 25 years of building that quality of life in the city of Toronto. Certainly no one government can take credit for that, no one level of government can take credit for it, and in many respects, in my opinion, it is a result of some strong municipal governments and some strong school boards. Personally, that's what I believe.

In any event, why is it ranked that way? It's ranked that way because of its quality of life, of its safe community, and a community is safe not just because of the police, although they're important, but because people have shelter and a standard of living. They rank it that way because of the education system and because of the quality of our arts community. We are threatening all of these things in the interest of finding \$5 billion a year for a tax break.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): What about the other \$100 billion, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: The member says, "What about the other \$100 billion?" It is a serious problem and that is the reason I simply don't think the province can afford a \$5-billion tax cut.

The cuts in health care are ones that perhaps concern me the most. I hope the tentative agreement with the doctors works out.

Mrs Boyd: It seems to be falling apart.

Mr Phillips: My colleague from London says, "It seems to be falling apart."

Here's how I look at the agreement. The government has said, "We're not going to put any more money into the doctors' payments." I might add that it isn't \$3.8 billion just for next year. The government's finances are essentially going to continue to be cut over the next three years. Just so everybody in the province knows, we are not even halfway along with the cuts the Conservative government's going to make. They say they're going to cut \$8 billion and we have not yet seen \$4 billion cut from the budget. The people of Ontario probably understand this, that they have not yet felt half the impact of the cuts yet. There is at least 50% more to come, and in my judgement perhaps more, because the government has made fairly optimistic assumptions about economic growth in the future, 3% a year every year into the next millennium, and most economists say that won't happen.

What's happening with the doctors is that the government is saying, "We're not going to find any more money, we're not prepared to put any more money in, but we'll be your partners in charging people out of their own pocket for services." I personally am concerned that the government was at the table with the OMA, but I don't think the people of Ontario were at the table with the OMA. I understand the OMA's need to represent the doctors, but when I see in the announcement that \$50 million in relief will be achieved through delisting, delisting means one thing: You still need the service, you still need that medical procedure, but the province won't pay for it, your Ontario insurance plan won't pay for it. You'll pay for it out of your own pocket. That's what the delisting jargon means.

On health care we've now seen user fees on drugs, which you promised you would not introduce. It isn't just a \$2 fee for lower-income people; it's the \$100 a year and then the \$6 fee for individuals with \$16,000 a year. For those of you who try and live on \$16,000 a year, you will know that is not a lot of money, but you've decided that they can afford \$100 a year and they can afford to pay \$6 every time they go for a prescription. Why? In my opinion, to help fund that huge tax break for the wealthy.

Hospitals: I don't know any organization as complicated and as difficult to manage and as important to a community, I don't know any organization like our hospital system that could ever manage a 20% cut over three years properly and still end up serving the public well. I guarantee you there are going to be major mistakes made. I see hospitals pitted against hospitals now, because it's a battle of survival.

That's on the hospitals; that's on the drug plan. Now we find in the doctors' agreement what's really going to happen; the document confirms it. A lot of things that previously were covered by your insurance you're going to have to now pay out of your own pocket.

Mr Ford: Chrétien must have thought Ontario didn't need it particularly. Did he, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: That may not mean much to the people in this room who have a nice drug plan and a nice insurance plan, but for the rest of the people in Ontario, particularly for those on lower income, it will mean something. We now find that the promise you made on health care seems to mean nothing.

1610

The promise you made on education: "We will not touch the classroom." I don't think you knew what you were talking about when you made that promise, because every school board in this province is being impacted in the classroom, without question. You have only begun your cuts; you are just moving on the major cuts that you say you're going to implement in health care.

On municipalities, you've cut 25% of their funding with another 25% coming. Where is it being made up? It is fee after fee. Some of it is, frankly, worrisome. For example, there's a nursing home in the area which has its fire alarms up to code. The problem is that when you have a fire alarm up to code, it periodically goes off; false alarm, but it goes off. They now owe \$3,000. The fire department, because its budgets are being cut, has to find funds elsewhere and is finding them by charging for false alarms. All of us want to cut out frivolous false alarms, I understand that, but you're putting at risk nursing homes, you're putting at risk safety in many areas.

The additional promises that you made in here: I go back to the job promise, because that is the one that in my opinion is going to be the most serious. I personally think we have a job crisis in Ontario.

Laughter.

Mr Phillips: The member from Rexdale is laughing, but I regard it as a crisis.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order.

Mr Phillips: I regard it as a crisis when there are 57,000 more people out of work in Ontario than there were a year ago. You may not. We have a difference of opinion about that. I regard it as a crisis when in the 1960s the unemployment rate in the province was 3.5%, in the 1970s it was 5.5%, in the 1980s it was 7.5% and in the 1990s it's 9%. Furthermore, I would perhaps feel better if the budget indicated that it was going to get better, but your own budget shows the number of unemployed people in 1996, 1997 and 1998 as higher than in 1995. You may not like to hear my figures, but these are your figures, and so I say it is a crisis. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale may not agree.

It is unacceptable for us to say it is all going to be handled. The unemployment rate among our young people is without any question of a doubt very close to 30%. Again, that's not me. You talk to the bank economists. It's reported at somewhere around 16%. I think the government's own economists would agree that there is a substantial number of young people who have simply dropped right out of the labour force. We have an unemployment rate among young people at 30%.

We have now — and this will not change, according to your own numbers, for the rest of the decade — over 500,000 people out of work in the province. I heard the Minister of Community and Social Services very pleased about many people on social assistance getting jobs. These are your numbers: 57,000 more people out of work in Ontario today than a year ago. I can guarantee you that we will have this debate continuously until you accept

that we have a dramatic problem that will only be solved when you accept that it is a dramatic problem.

I might take a moment to digress a little about one of the problems in politics and one of the reasons people get cynical about politicians. It has to do with the jobs thing.

In the last 12 months there has been one good month in Ontario. That was August. I said publicly that August was a strong month. I say this for the people at home: I'm in opposition so I tried to be fair and said that August was a strong jobs month. It was. The rest of the months have been weak. Of course, and this is understandable, when I ask a question and say, "Listen, the employment problem is serious," the Premier then says, "Well, you yourself said that it's not a problem, that it's a strong month." The reason I raise this is that you can see how people can get very cynical about politicians. When you try to say, "Yes, there was one good month, August, but the rest of the months have been a problem," it is used against you forever. I just had to get that off my chest.

I want to come back to what I regard as perhaps the most significant problem we will face, and that is employment. If any of you can find me what you would regard or what people on the street would regard as a reputable economist who would come to us and say, "I support that there will be 725,000 jobs created with this plan," I invite you to bring them to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. No economist believes you. It's not going to happen. The longer you ignore the problem and say it will go away, the worse it will get.

What should be done about it? Here's what should be done about it, because it's fine to barrack, but the first thing — I would actually urge the backbench to take a good look at this and raise it with your cabinet — is that we have to accept that it is a serious problem that is not going to go away. These are your own numbers. You are not making a dint in the number of unemployed in the province. Your plans don't call for that. It will be a problem next year; it will be a problem the year after. We should be making employment our number one issue in Ontario. It isn't right now because you say you're going to solve it, so it's gone.

In managing the reductions, right now the marching orders from the government are, "More with less." It's become almost a badge who can cut the most number of jobs. What should we be doing? We should be saying, "How can we improve the service, manage our finances and look at ways we preserve jobs?"

The next thing we should do is that we should get, to use the jargon, the stakeholders, the major players, and challenge them. There are things, there are ideas people have about how we can structure programs so that it makes it more attractive to hire people, how we can find ways that we don't simply say: "More with less. Who can cut the most?" But so far all we get from the government is: "This is not a problem. You are being alarmist."

I believe strongly that this is a problem we're not even beginning to tackle. There will be some good months, some bad months, but overall according to your own numbers — by the way, the number of people unemployed is far worse than you thought; you didn't predict

there would be 57,000 more people out of work now than there was a year ago, never predicted that.

I want to talk a little bit about the cuts to come, because as I said earlier, we've only just begun. I don't think the province of Ontario has yet recognized the depth of cuts. There are going to be major demonstrations around tomorrow and the following day. I think some of those organizations anticipate what's going to happen, but perhaps they don't fully appreciate what still has to come.

Hospital cuts: You are barely a third of the way to the cuts you are going to make in hospitals. You've got two thirds more to come, huge cuts in hospitals that are going to impact every community in this province. As I said before, everybody is interested in managing the system more efficiently, but this is perhaps the worst way you'd do it, by choking them off and then hoping they come up with a sensible, reasonable solution.

1620

Our school system is just beginning to see the cuts. As a matter of fact, last year the Minister of Education and Training announced a \$400-million cut only to find that he couldn't make it happen. He cut it back to \$233 million and took \$167 million out of capital. But the minister has said that his goal is to cut \$1 billion from the education budget. I guarantee you that two things are going to happen. One is that you're going to find classrooms larger and larger. It will be the members —

Mr Phillips: I don't want to misstate who this is. This is Mr Galt from Northumberland. I will just say to the people of Northumberland —

The Acting Speaker: I think it's Mr Ford. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Humber, come to order, please.

Mr Phillips: Mr Ford. Sorry, I apologize.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Humber, come to order, please.

Mr Phillips: I apologize. Mr Ford from Etobicoke-Humber I think has some interesting meetings to look forward to as classrooms in Etobicoke get larger and larger and he simply says: "We've got to fund the tax cut somehow or other. That's why we're cutting you by 25%." They may say: "Mr Ford, you went around here saying you wouldn't touch classroom funding. What's going on?" He'll just have to say, "I made a mistake," or somehow or other weasel out from it. But people voted for you because you promised full funding for health care.

You've now found that you're going to cut 20% from hospitals, that you've imposed user fees on all seniors in Etobicoke, and in my area the people who are running for your party promised they'd never do that. You've now found that the agreement you're reaching with doctors is going to mean that sick people will have to pay out of their own pockets for services. You thought you were running on none of this. You promised none of this.

Law enforcement: When you cut your support for municipalities by 50%, only one of two things can happen: You cut services or you increase taxes, because the organizations over the last few years have been

grinding to become more efficient. Every organization in this province, every municipality, every school board is grinding to become more efficient.

The reason I raise all that is because this is the document that people elected this government on, and now we're finding things beginning to unravel, be it the job promise — I was interested that the other day the Premier was trying to qualify the job promise. "Well, it's 725,000 jobs, maybe most of them at the end." But that isn't what the unemployed were promised. As a matter of fact, I remember this document said, "Ontario needs jobs today," and it's not happening.

You are not keeping up nearly with the job growth, the number of people coming into the labour force, let alone reducing unemployment. I am particularly concerned about many people who are on social assistance. You're saying, "Go out and get a job," and I think they have a legitimate point to raise: "Yes, I would, but with another 57,000 people looking for work right now it is tougher today than it was a year ago."

I want to talk about cuts to come, because in the health area the government has just begun. They have promised they will cut our hospital budgets this year — this year, just so we all know — by \$365 million. Next year it becomes \$435 million; the year after that, \$507 million. It not only is three years of significant cuts, but each cut gets bigger and bigger and bigger. They cut \$225 million out of the drug plan. As I say, they are planning to cut 25% of support for education; in municipalities, virtually half of the funding.

We're seeing throughout the province the impact of that. The auditor signalled his concerns in several areas. He signalled concerns in the area of the environment. I will just say, as I said earlier, if you were to ask the auditor what is the area that concerns him the most, he says it is the lack of attention to the environment. I guarantee you that if there's something that concerns the people of Ontario, it will be the quality of the air they breathe and the quality of the water they drink. He's signalling both of these things as major problems.

I know the public love the idea of fewer civil servants. Well, yes, in general. But specifically, if it means that we are going to have problems with our health as a result of air and water, if it means, as the auditor points out here, that we are losing tens of millions of dollars of tax revenue because we are not properly auditing businesses — again, the overwhelming majority of the businesses in Ontario are clearly law-abiding and what not, but as soon as you make it easy for some to break the law, you are running the risk of creating a significant problem. Similarly with our community and social services.

The government has been in office 16 months, and as we look at things beginning to unfold, people are now legitimately asking questions around the basic promises. Where are the 725,000 jobs? Why aren't we seeing fewer people out of work in Ontario? What happened to the promise to not touch health care? Why did you put a charge on drugs?

To be fair, in the document there was at least one businessperson who spoke strongly about the plan. I wanted this to be a balanced presentation, because within

the document there was a president of a company who said, "Having reviewed the Mike Harris plan, I am convinced that the tax incentives for people in business will help create an economic climate of dynamic growth and new jobs in Ontario." That was the only president who commented. Who do you think that was? That was Bill Young from Consumers Distributing. Consumers Distributing just went out of business, as I think most know. The one businessperson who lent his name to this plan of the tax scheme — and I can understand why people making a lot of money would like the tax break, but it is at the expense of services for the province of Ontario.

By the way, when someone says, "Well, these things aren't related" — the tax scheme, the tax break, is not related to the expenditure cuts — that's not what you said. You said, "Balancing the budget is tied directly to every other measure in our plan." The tax cut and the spending cut —

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Is that Dave Crombie over there barracking? Oh, it's Al Leach. Where is Crombie? He must be in the gallery here somewhere. Al Leach's lips are moving but Crombie's speaking.

Well, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who's waiting for somebody to give him an answer — I guess he's waiting for Crombie to tell him what he thinks.

I appreciate Mr Leach, the former manager of the TTC, barracking there, but the fact is that you ran around promising that you would see 12,000 jobs a month created. It's not happening. You promised all the senior citizens in your riding you wouldn't put a user fee on drugs, and you've got one.

1630

Mrs Boyd: And they'd keep rent control.

Mr Phillips: You promised to protect rent control.

You promised that you wouldn't cut health care, and now what we're finding is you've cut 20% from the budgets of the hospitals. You promised that you would protect people on health care. We now find the deal that I guess you've made with the OMA calls for people to have to pay for health services out of their own pocket now.

You promised that you wouldn't touch the classroom. I remember that. You got elected on this promise. Now what have you done? You've cut 25% from the support.

You promised we would see fewer people unemployed. There are 57,000 more people out of work right now than there were a year ago. Incredible.

I think many people in Ontario said: "Well, these people know how to manage things. They're the Conservative Party. They look like business people. They talk like business people. They must know how to manage things." Everything you're touching is falling apart. The family benefit plan. The health system is frankly in chaos. Mr Wilson is working as hard as he can. I know he's working. I'm feeling sorry for him. He's working weekends. Nobody's working harder than Jim Wilson. But he's having trouble getting this thing together.

The Minister of Education is creating a crisis a day. I don't think he thinks about what he's saying, because much of what he says doesn't make sense, so I assume he

didn't think about it. If I were in the back bench, I would say: "Please, Mr Snobelen, take a holiday. Say no more. Let it calm down a bit." He must cause each of you 50 calls a day. He muses daily about the crisis in education, but the real crisis is this: They are cutting 25% from the support, and that will without question impact the classroom. The young people in this province are now paying 20% more in tuition fees than they paid a year ago, and that is having a dramatic impact on entrances for them.

What I wanted to say in an overview sense is that we're talking about supply, to give the government the finances to proceed to pay its bills, and of course they will get that approval because they have that right. But we in our party want to express our continuing and our profound disagreement on the basic fiscal plan of the government. We simply do not agree that the 30% tax scheme, one that benefits the best off, funded by deep, deep cuts far beyond what you promised, is the right approach.

It's now beginning to unfold that they're not delivering on the things they promised in the document. It's now beginning to unfold that perhaps the great managers aren't very good managers at all. As a matter of fact, almost everything they touch seems to begin to unravel. We in the opposition have tried to give some suggestions today on things they could be doing on the job front. Clearly the smart thing to do would be to say: "Listen, we are going too far too fast on our expenditure cuts. It is time to manage these things properly. Let's simply say," if you want, "the tax cut is going to have to wait. Let's just manage our finances on a much more sensible, reasonable basis." That's what I think they should do.

In the health area I think it is a mistake to cut 20% from the hospitals in a three-year period and expect them to manage. That's a fundamental mistake. In dealing with our doctors, I am more concerned today than I was a few days ago that we are clearly heading to a two-tiered health system in Ontario. If you are one of those people making \$150,000 a year with a \$5,000 tax break, you can buy what you need in health care. But for the normal, decent, hardworking people of the province of Ontario, this is a problem.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): By agreement we split our time, so I will use the remainder of the Liberal time to make some remarks about interim supply, though I must say I was watching some of this in another place and my colleague the very urbane member for Scarborough-Agincourt seemed to be agitating the treasury bench today in a way that is not his custom. I don't know whether it was the pointedness of his remarks or just the Thursday afternoon sensitivity of the government benches.

Goodness, I saw one after another popping up. The member from Brant I think was up and the member for Etobicoke-Humber was exercised, and someone else — I think it was O'Toole from Durham wherever — three of them. Not really what the member from Agincourt is noted for around here. So it must mean, I say to my colleague from Scarborough, that the government bench is a bit more sensitive these days than it might have been. It's about that time, I say to everybody's favourite populist from Rexdale, who seems to be exercised outside

of his own seat. You see, I've been here too long to engage in these sort of easy partisan games.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Well, you don't do it in question period.

Mr Conway: No. Governments have to be held to account. I promise I'll never do the things Mike Harris did. I'll guarantee you that. I won't engage in those kind of tricks.

I find it interesting, the sensitivity. My friend from Mississauga South is underneath the gallery, and she was I think rightly concerned the other day about some — I was going to say godless behaviour by some socialist that offended the British parliamentary traditions that we honour here on a daily basis. I thought to myself, it's a good job some of these Tories just don't remember the good old Mike Harris of yesteryear. But that's yesterday and I'm here to talk about today and tomorrow.

There are before the province today a number, I think, of very serious issues. I was interested by my colleague's comments around the jobs question. One of the newspapers that I read from time to time is the Sault Star. I was struck a few months ago — actually it was in the spring of this year that the Sault Star did something that was very useful. It actually took a look at that northern Ontario city of 80,000 and did an analysis of the job losses in Sault Ste Marie as a result of provincial government cuts.

According to the Sault Star of Thursday, April 25, 1996, the Harris government cuts in that one city alone had cost the city and the Algoma region, but primarily the city of Sault Ste Marie, 500 jobs. Today we heard a couple of members of the assembly raise with the Minister of Finance a concern that's now abroad in that part of north-central Ontario, northwestern Ontario perhaps, that the government is considering privatizing the lottery corporation, and this of course would also have a negative impact on the job situation in that one community.

I was in my home community of Pembroke on the weekend, as I almost always am, talking to small business people. I was in talking to my accountant, a very good fellow, and I was asking him, how are things going? They're not going as well as, quite frankly, we all had expected. My accountant is quite a good fellow. He's been in business for over 20 years and he is in a very good position to take the temperature of the business community in our part of eastern Ontario. To be sure, this is not all the fault of government and, to be fair, to the extent it is a fault of government, it's not the fault of the provincial government.

But I simply raise the Sault Star story of a few months ago where 500 jobs were lost. I make reference to some anecdotal evidence in my part of eastern Ontario to the effect that the job issue remains for many people in this province, I dare say for most people in this province, the primary concern. There is simply not the confidence level yet in much of the Ontario economy to get things moving again in a way that we would all like to see.

I'm not here, again, to oversell what it is that governments can do, but it is very clear to me that the fiscal policies, I must say, of both the federal and provincial governments are having a negative effect in terms of job

losses in the public and parapublic sectors, and in areas like my own it is rippling through the private sector. When I talk to car dealers, when I talk to furniture store owners, they tell me business is not what they had expected. Many of these people, to be frank, embrace the fiscal policy, or much of it, of the current provincial government —

1640

Mr Wettlaufer: Do you want to repeat that, please?

Mr Conway: Well, I want to be fair. They are not people who are uninterested in some of the fiscal policy that the current provincial government is pursuing, but the reality for them in their place of business is that the stimulative effect that everybody was expecting is not yet evident.

I was down, as I sometimes am, in Waterloo county the other day and I must say that at least in north Waterloo there appeared to be a greater buoyancy than I found in some other parts of the regional economy in southwestern Ontario.

I was reading the Kitchener-Waterloo Record —

Mr Wettlaufer: That was your first mistake.

Mr Conway: Well, I used to read even more interesting things, I say to my friend from Kitchener, in the tab, that Southam paper where he seemed to be featured prominently. Boy, I wish I'd brought some of those clippings in here.

When I see government members saying on the front pages of their papers, in communities like Kitchener, "You cannot close the hospital, it saved my life," I understand that government policy is not just of concern to opposition members. I have been struck as I have travelled around the province recently at the number of government members who are recoiling from the Wilson-Harris juggernaut that is travelling around and about, from Ottawa to Thunder Bay, from Barrie to Sudbury, from Pembroke to Windsor, closing hospitals and threatening a variety of the other aspects of our health, social service and educational commitment.

Speaking about matters educational, I noticed — and I think this is a very telling and disturbing trend. There was an excellent article the other day by Virginia Galt, the education reporter for the Globe and Mail, a front-page story headlined "Ontario Teachers California Bound." When we think about jobs, many of us think about young people; what kind of hope and opportunity we are holding out to young people. I thought the article from the Globe and Mail of October 21, 1996 — as I say, headlined "Ontario Teachers California Bound" — was an interesting commentary.

The Republican Governor of California, Pete Wilson, has embarked upon a \$1-billion initiative to improve the public schools of that largest of the American states — by the way, his initiative comes after years of Snobelen-like attacks and cuts — and the California state public school system expects to hire something in the neighbourhood of 20,000 teachers in the next relatively short period of time.

The Globe story refers to a young man, Gary Pieters by name, a recent graduate of the University of Toronto faculty of education, who is just one of the best and the brightest apparently, an Ontarian, a proud product of our

school system, of one of the professional faculties, the very kind of young person you want to have available for participation — available for hire I guess is what I wanted to say, and he was available for hire but there simply were no jobs and no opportunities, so Gary Pieters is now bound for a community in California.

It's interesting that a big part of the California initiative is that they're going to produce a pupil-teacher ratio of 20 to 1 in the primary grades, the very thing the right wing in the United States and Canada was attacking in recent times. Now the Republican Governor of California, presumably with the support of his administration and the state Legislature, is making a massive investment of public moneys in the public schools of California, and a big part of the initiative is to ensure that in the primary grades — grades 1, 2 and 3 — there will be no more than 20 students per teacher.

It's very interesting, because that's the very kind of public school system that apparently John Snobelen is determined to attack and destroy.

The member shakes his head. I'm not here to provoke my friend O'Toole, like Phillips apparently did, but I have to say that if one visits our schools, if you talk to parents and if you talk to teachers, they are concerned about current and projected directions. To be fair, they're not very happy about some of what we've delivered over the last 20 years.

Here I will perhaps differ a bit from some of my own colleagues and perhaps from my friends in the New Democratic Party. I'll give Harris and the Tom Longs and the Guy Giornos credit for this: Whether it was in education or in welfare, they understood far better than the Liberals and the New Democrats what people were mad about and they did a very effective job at discerning and responding to the anger and the resentment and the concern that was out there in the community, particularly in areas like welfare, education and a few other areas — no doubt about it. But I'm telling you, I don't think Mike Harris and John Snobelen have any mandate to destroy the public schools of Ontario. I am deeply concerned that in their hell-bent rush to meet some kind of right-wing ideological imperative, they are prepared to do that.

When I hear from friends in the educational community and old colleagues in the department of education about this very great interest in charter schools, I know what that's all about. That is the not-so-thin edge of the wedge that is going to undermine and potentially destabilize and destroy the public schools of Ontario. I am the first to admit that our public schools are not without problems, and they're not all the government's fault. Those of us as citizens, parents, teachers, yes, absolutely the teacher federation leadership, we all have a significant share of the responsibility for the imperfection that is causing the concern in the public. But I don't believe that gives any of us, most of all Her Majesty's recently elected Ontario provincial government, a mandate to destabilize and to destroy the public schools. There is a very great concern in much of middle-class Ontario today that this character Snobelen and his Einsteinian friend Harris are apparently willing to do that.

Mr Preston: That's fallacious.

Mr Conway: The bard of Brant-Haldimand, formerly of Grimsby, tells me that's fallacious. Well, we shall see what we shall see. Nobody thought that Gingrich would do the things he actually tried to do a year ago, but apparently he was not to be deterred in his enthusiasms.

I look at the health care area and I see something of the same. It reminds me, I watch this commission headed by the former dean of medicine at Queen's University, the very distinguished Duncan Sinclair, and they're making their way — they started, interestingly, in the home town of my leader and colleague, Mrs McLeod, in Thunder Bay. They've moved now down into Sudbury, they have been to the national capital, and soon they'll be coming to a neighbourhood near you.

It's interesting hearing on a daily basis from the leader of the government, Mr Michael D. Harris, that there are no cuts in health care. I don't know very many people who believe that. I was in North Bay the other day talking to some of my friends, one of whom is a doctor of some years practice in that community. I'm going to tell you, he wouldn't accept the rhetoric of his member, not for a moment.

But it is an interesting proposition. We have this commission and they're moving around the province and they are going to — they have. They've closed three of five hospitals in Thunder Bay, they've closed two of three hospitals in Sudbury. They are in the national capital.

Madam Speaker, I think there must be a bazaar to which I'm not invited.

The Acting Speaker: Could I ask the government members to please keep your conversations down? There are too many going on. And please take your seats.

Mr Conway: It is an interesting thing for me to watch this hospital commission. I know things have changed in the province. In some respects, they've changed very significantly. But when I read in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record that the local Conservative member is saying something to the effect of, "You can't close the hospital that saved my life," I see something that is understandable. When they get to the Willett or when they get to the Ottawa Civic or when they get to the hospitals in London or they get to some hospital in Etobicoke, I suspect all honourable members, irrespective of their political affiliation, are going to feel something of the urge that was articulated by our colleague the member from Kitchener city. It may be that times have changed since the day that Frank Miller set out to do this. Frank, you know, was going to close the Doctors' Hospital. Well, it didn't quite work out that way.

1650

I was thinking the other day that Leonid Brezhnev thought that winters in Afghanistan were kind of inviting. Down the road he went and he got himself into those mountain passes in Afghanistan, and he just found that getting out of the Afghani winter passes was an infinitely more complicated, painful and life-threatening reality than getting in.

I see the puzzled look of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Let me say by analogy that I hope Mr Harris and, more especially, his Minister of Health don't, speaking metaphorically, find themselves caught in the

winter passes of Afghanistan only to find that there is no easy retreat.

I remember the day that Larry Grossman opened the hospital that Frank Miller closed. We're going to find out something about the pain tolerance of members. I don't doubt that the intake of 1995, a very redoubtable and resilient and hardy bunch that they are, have an infinitely higher pain tolerance than those of us faint-hearted types elected 20 years ago. I am sure that when the hospital commission visits Oxford county or Etobicoke, our friends opposite will say: "Ready, aye, ready. Cut, and cut perhaps more deeply." But we shall see what we shall see. This is also about public opinion. It is about what the public views as appropriate public policy.

I see my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs here, looking very serious, as is his wont, and my colleague from Oakwood is not here, so his blood pressure is evidently more stable. But we see the Harris mandate at work in the area of municipal restructuring.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Renfrew North please try to not provoke the government members. Government members, please come to order.

Mr Conway: The government's leading royalist, the member for Scarborough Canadian Tire, is being quite voluble, and not in his own seat.

When we look at municipal restructuring, I'm reminded again that I don't think there are very many people who would disagree that there are a number of efficiencies both achievable and desirable. I'm watching people in my communities in rural eastern Ontario come to terms with the funding changes, and there is a real degree of willingness to make change. The expectation on the part particularly of taxpayers is that we are going to restructure in a way that is presumably going to reduce the number of politicians locally, moderate and hopefully reduce the tax burden, and maintain a reasonable level of services. I think that seems to be the government's objective.

So I say to my friend from Oxford, we will be very interested to see the microapplication of the macro plan. You know, John White and Bill Davis 25 years ago had some of that as their intent. It's just that something happened on the way to the forum. Really, the only thing that saved the government's bacon at the time were these massive airlifts of government money sprinkled out over particularly the suburban hinterland of southwestern and south-central Ontario to keep the whole thing from just blowing up, and it very nearly did blow up. I mean, the sainted James N. Allan — a finer person never came to this place — lost his seat in the assembly in the election of 1975 because he could not explain in any coherent and effective way to the burghers of Haldimand-Norfolk that in fact the performance of the reforms met the promise of their offering some years before.

Al Leach is a different cat than that misguided Darcy McKeough and the late John White, because Al Leach has been around the circle. He knows you've got to deliver and you can't promise what you can't deliver. But I am going to be fascinated. I said to the minister sotto voce one day that north of Highway 7 — I'm glad to see my friend from Hastings is here — it is not going to be

a small challenge to show the good people of eastern Ontario, particularly rural eastern Ontario, that you're going to be able to deliver what you obviously want to deliver.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Pardon me?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): You have to negotiate.

Mr Conway: Oh, let me take this opportunity to say publicly what I've said privately. There's a vast section of eastern Ontario that I represent where you can make the rural townships as large as you want them. You can take one and you can make 20 of them. You've got a regional municipality where probably 60% of the land base is owned by Her Majesty in right of the government of Ontario.

You can, if you wish to remove the provincial grants, reduce them or eliminate them — you might want to make some other changes — but in that restructured world where we're going to have a more user-pay principle, if you think Her Majesty, in right of the Ontario government, as represented by the imperial authority of the Department of Lands and Forests, is going to escape some new costs, you have some thinking to do.

I don't say that mischievously. I think thoughtful people who look at these reforms understand that while changes are possible, we really have to change the business. I'm going to be very interested to see what the attitude of the Minister of Natural Resources is going to be as the principal landlord, as the principal property owner in the vast tract of the Precambrian Shield that you can find north of Kingston, east of Lakefield, west of Eganville and south of Algonquin Park. You can certainly make changes. You can retreat in some respects, but if you think you're going to be excused from paying some freight, you've got another thought coming.

I'm going to be interested to find out how small business people, cottagers, farmers are going to react. Trust me, I say to the parliamentary assistant from Oxford, they are going to understand very quickly that it is a different reality. There are fewer government grants and there certainly are going to be very great pressures to extract some taxes from provincial governments and provincial agencies.

It is my contention that we have had much discussion. There has been much advertisement of a new order, but whether it's in education or health care, we've not yet come to a point where there is an impact that is being felt by people in the community.

I read in the Ottawa press recently that the government is going to abolish school boards. That's going to be interesting. I know they can't abolish school boards, however desirable an objective that might be, and I know the government has access to very fine lawyers who will tell them there are at least two sets of school boards you can't abolish.

I keep thinking, because many opposite, like the very fine member for Oxford, have experience in municipal council, are there municipal politicians out there who want to take on to themselves the daily burden of explaining why the school bus got stuck in some far corner

of Durham township and didn't show up at the farm laneway at 25 after 7, thereby backing up?

Interjection.

Mr Conway: He says there are. Well, that's a brave new world. I'm delighted. I will be happy to go to Oxford county. I want to meet these municipal politicians who want to take on to themselves that responsibility.

I think there is room for school board reform. Make no mistake about it. But the notion that we are going to simply transfer most of that decision-making either to some Toronto-based provincial bureaucrat or some kind of fuzzy-wuzzy local authority is, I think, going to be a very interesting experiment in altered local democracy.

1700

I want to make a couple of quick observations about two other issues. The first has to do with video lottery terminals. I continue to be struck by the resistance of many people in my county of Renfrew, my city of Pembroke, about the government's headlong rush into this new business of electronic slot machines. There are some people with whom I have discussed the matter who find it just absolutely incredible that a Conservative government, a government that seems to pay some regard to family values, is so willing to embrace what we now know is an area where organized crime has had some very real presence and where, according to recent press reports, the legalization of these electronic slot machines, the crack cocaine of the gambling world — the Tory government of Mike Harris and Bert Johnson and Ernie Hardeman and Rob Sampson and Dave Johnson — St Dave of Leaside — is actually willing to get into bed with this kind of activity. It's a kind of Faustian deal, apparently driven by the absolute necessity of getting the cash.

Reading the Ottawa papers in recent weeks, I've been struck by some of the commentary, some of it from church leaders in the Hull-Gatineau area, about the incredible problems they're having in that part of western Quebec with this casino, and they are real problems; they're not imaginary problems. You've got people running soup kitchens that are now shutting down because their source of income was a bingo that they ran to keep the soup kitchen operating so that people who had lost their shirts over at the casino could have a place to go and at least get a square meal. I think it's in Gatineau the bishop and other community leaders are saying, "We're going to shut down the soup kitchen because our source of income is gone and our source of income, the bingo, the local charity, is gone at a very time when our business is going up, when there are more and more people who need the services that we provide."

I know we've all been involved with gambling of one sort or another, I'm not here to be unduly judgemental, but surely we have an obligation to listen to what people — whether it's the North Bay city council, whether it's the Anglican bishop of Niagara, whether it is the OPP, whether it's the anti-rackets branch of the RCM Police, we have an obligation to listen carefully to what they are saying about a qualitative advance into this gaming business. I repeat, very knowledgeable people are reminding us that electronic slot machines are the crack cocaine of the gambling world and we are, for whatever

reason, going to embrace that crack cocaine with all of the attendant police worries about organized crime that have been repeated ad nauseam here in the last few weeks. To what end? Sure we will get a few sous, a few coins to get us through the night.

Someone once said it profit a man little to gain the world if in the process one sells his soul. Well, are we really selling — if we are selling ourselves in this respect, I think we'd better pay attention to some of the consequences, not just social but economic and crime related.

I say very seriously, as the member for Mississauga South joins us, those of us in the opposition expect that pillars of the moral establishment like Mrs Marland and Ernie Eves and perhaps even the Minister of Natural Resources are going to, in the confines of either cabinet or the government caucus — I say to the minister of Natural Resources, can you imagine the ghost of Leslie Frost going home on a Friday night and explaining to Gertrude that a Conservative government is going to endorse the electronic slot machines that are the crack — can you imagine a Frost or a Davis Conservative embracing something that the cops have told us is as toxic? I find it very difficult, and I say in all seriousness that the people of Ontario expect some good sense and some moderate good judgement on this question.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Yes, you do, as a matter of fact.

I do, at the outset, want to request unanimous consent to split this time among members of this caucus.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Can you tell me how many you're splitting it with?

Mr Kormos: It could be any number.

The Acting Speaker: All right. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Kormos: It's called an omnibus split. But I'll be more specific. Specifically, the member for Dovercourt, the member for Fort York and the member for London Centre, among others. How'd I do?

The Acting Speaker: Please continue.

Mr Kormos: I've been listening to the comments from the members of the Liberal caucus. One of the nice things about being able to speak to one of these things is that it's relatively free-wheeling. I know that the Speaker's chair has become a little more rigid in the recent past. I hope that this new discipline coming from the Speaker's chair does not interfere with the somewhat unfettered nature of comments to these sorts of bills.

Unlike others, I'm not as inclined to support this, quite frankly. Here we are on the eve of what is going to be the largest labour protest, joined by friends and seniors and young people and students and the unemployed, yes — and there are many of them; indeed more now in Ontario than there were a year ago — the poor, and the families of the sick, who will be in the streets of Toronto tomorrow and on Saturday en masse, in numbers that have been unprecedented in most of our lifetimes, to clearly say no to a government that has said no to them, a government that's said no with indifference and smugness and arrogance.

You heard me earlier today, Speaker — I know the Speaker got a little upset when I suggested that the Minister of Community and Social Services should get off her butt. The Speaker ruled me out of order. I stood here in response to the incredibly naïve statement by the Minister of Community and Social Services, and in response to that incredibly naïve statement I said that maybe the Minister of Community and Social Services should get off her butt and out of her limousine. The Speaker, of course, objected, as you know, to me saying that she should get off her butt. I then suggested, after withdrawing that, that maybe she should stop sitting on her brains. That Speaker got irate again, and I had to withdraw that.

So I'll not suggest now that this Minister of Community and Social Services, with an audacious statement to the House today, should get off her butt. It may well be what I feel in my heart, but I'm not going to say it, nor am I going to suggest that she should stop sitting on her brains, because I'd be unparliamentary. Even though I may feel it in my heart and know it in my soul, I'm not going to say it here, because if I did, you'd jump to your feet in a fury and insist that I withdraw and I'd be compelled to, somewhat meekly, stand up and say: "Speaker, I withdraw. Please, can I carry on with the rest of my comments?" So I'm not going to suggest either of those things, but you know what I'm thinking, don't you, Speaker?

I'm thinking the same sort of thing that a whole lot of people are talking about outside this chamber. People are shocked. I've received phone calls over the course of this afternoon, and I know that some of my colleagues have, about this \$80,000 survey — one of many and probably one of the less expensive surveys and polls that this government has engaged in — that indicates that, by God, some people left the welfare system over a period of one month here in 1996.

I saw the Minister of Community and Social Services in the scrum outside. You should have seen her out there. There she was with the lights on her and the microphones in her face, and her little handler — I'm sorry, I shouldn't — but a handler tugging on her. The body language was oh so apparent: "Ms Ecker, get the heck out of here. This is coming to no good. You're not handling this very well." Indeed, twice the handler — these are the staff that people like ministers have to try to keep them out of trouble. Lord knows it hasn't worked for many a minister in many a government. Not all handlers are equal. Quite frankly, maybe Ms Ecker, because I did call for her resignation, should just pose in the Sun and get it over with quickly. But her handler was tugging on her arm. Her handler was tugging on her arm and saying: "Ms Ecker, we've got to get out of here. This is coming to no good. The press are asking you questions that are revealing the shallowness, the meagreness, of the substance of this report."

1710

Interjection: Take flight.

Mr Kormos: Yes. "Take flight. Get the hell out of here," was basically what they were saying to her, "before you dig the hole deeper." At one point the handler told the press: "Well, that's it. One more ques-

tion." I believe it was the president of the press gallery — is that Richard Brennan? — who said: "Hell's bells. What do you mean, one more question? It was you who were late, Ms Ecker." What happens with these things, you've got to understand, is that some spin doctor from the minister's office called up the press gallery and said, "Ms Ecker is going to submit to a scrum at 11:15 outside the front doors of the chamber." That's how we knew about it, because of course it was well publicized for the press gallery. So we rushed up here. We wanted to hear what Ms Ecker had to say.

As it was, she was late, but the press waited because they anticipated that here is a minister, the Minister of Community and Social Services; \$80,000 of taxpayers' money on this report, on this survey. By God, maybe there was going to be news. Well, there was news. As it ends up, the news was that Ms Ecker has no interest, no concern, no compassion and no plan whatsoever for relieving the poor and the unemployed of this province of the despair and tragedy of that poverty and unemployment.

She somehow suggested that it was something, by God, as if she herself had done it, and if not she herself then perhaps her predecessor Mr Tsubouchi, who's now the minister of slot machines. Yes, electronic slot machines in every bar and every tavern and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in this province. What's remarkable is that Mr Tsubouchi doesn't appear to have any greater a handle on the issues that are confronting him or his ministry as Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations than he did as Minister of Community and Social Services.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Are you surprised?

Mr Kormos: No, that doesn't surprise me at all. It's sad, though, and incredibly pathetic in view of the challenges that real people out there and families and neighbourhoods and communities are facing after a year and change of this government.

Here we are, a government that apparently has as its sole objective the goal of transforming this province from one which, with struggle and with some sacrifice, was trying to ensure that every member of this provincial community had an opportunity to share in its economy. This government, with vigour, has been steamrolling ahead, creating two different Ontarios — one for the very wealthy, for the blue-suited friends of Mike the Knife, Mike the Duffer, the friends of the Tories, the companies, the corporate — you know what these people think when they talk about small business? When they talk about small business, they talk about somebody with 100 or 150 non-union workers making minimum wage. That's what the Tories' perspective of small business is. They don't know about the real small business of Ontario, the real little people, the Mom and Poppers.

In any event, the sole goal, the singular goal of creating two Ontarios: a very exclusive Ontario — Speaker, please; thank you — for the very wealthy, the élite, who will become wealthier as a result of the tax cut, the payoff that Harris and his gang are giving to the wealthy in this province, and an increasing number of poor and disfranchised, including increasing numbers of

the middle class who are descending into a poverty that they in their lifetimes never expected to have imposed on them.

What has Ms Ecker got to say? She tells us, "Oh, people left the welfare system in June 1996 and they left it as a result of finding jobs." I called it a no-brainer. I didn't coin that. That was your colleague, the chief Speaker, Chris Stockwell, who from time to time made reference — anyway, it's a great concept, that concept of a no-brainer. That's a Stockwellism. This is a classic no-brainer. For decades people have been going off welfare because they happen to find a job. There's no issue. So what's new? Please, for 80 grand, tell us something we don't know.

Ms Ecker waves this survey as if somehow suggesting that this government could take some responsibility for the fact that a few people happened to find jobs, but at the same time not acknowledging that just as there were people who found some work, there were also people who found themselves out of work and into the welfare system at the very same time. Ms Ecker doesn't want to talk about those people. Eighty grand for a survey and not a single penny of that \$80,000 was dedicated to identifying those people who had to go on welfare in June 1996. No discussion by Ms Ecker of the 40% of respondents who were forced off welfare with no jobs available to them. That's the real story here. No discussion by Ms Ecker of the 11% of respondents in this survey, women with children, who as a result of her so-called welfare reform — I must acknowledge that, with some candour, the authors of the survey agree with this — 11% of them, women, most with little kids, children, forced back into homes occupied by previous spouses or partners that clearly they had left originally. The irresistible conclusion — we know this, come on; this is real life — was that they left in the first place because of the dangers inherent there, either the hostility or the abuse or the imminent or actual violence that was being imposed on them, women and their kids.

So Ms Ecker takes pride in forcing abused women back into abusive homes? Ms Ecker takes pride in forcing little kids back into households where they're going to witness violence or be the victims of it? She with smugness was proclaiming this as some sort of victory for the Tories. If that's a victory, I'll take the contrary any day, I tell you that. The fact is that there's nothing in today's survey, this \$80,000 gem, that tells us anything about the reality of poverty in this province, in this community, here in the city of Toronto.

Ms Ecker didn't want to talk about the residents of Harrisville. You read in the papers — and sadly I wasn't there. Lord knows what would have happened had I been. Surely you don't agree with this, Speaker, and I know that you'll speak up, using your office, to protest the arrest of 10 people yesterday. Do you recall that? Ten people were arrested outside this chamber yesterday who were protesting this government's inaction with respect to poverty and the homeless. They were charged with mischief.

If I dare for just a minute, let me explain what I understand the charge of mischief to be. It's damage to somebody else's property or to public property —

damage. If I go out into the parking lot and scratch your BMW with my car key, if I scratch your expensive European car with my car key, that's mischief. I understand that. That's damage to somebody else's property. Again, unfortunately, these things happen. If I destroy a park bench, that's mischief; that's damage to public property.

But let me tell you what the reports are as to what these protesters were doing. They were pouring some dirt, and where were they pouring it? On the ground, because they wanted to plant some seeds as a symbol of the desperation of poor people in this province and in this community. They put dirt on top of dirt. Do you get it? Do you get the irony of this? You, Speaker, in your position of authority, won't speak out against the injustice of 10 people being hauled off to jail for pouring a little dirt — and it wasn't a volume of dirt — on top of dirt and planting seeds. We take people to jail for planting seeds? Ms Ecker didn't want to talk about those folks.

1720

I suggested to Ms Ecker that she should get off her — well, rise and leave her limo and look poverty in its face. I'll tell you this: Ms Ecker is doing her ministerial duties right now, I understand that. She's being spinned or doctored or worked over or taped or retaped or dubbed or whatever it is they do nowadays to ministers to try to get them into fighting form.

People better understand. You know, it's incredible that in the midst of the growing poverty in this province, the poverty that is infecting every part of this province, that is infecting every community, that is infecting families who never, as I say, anticipated that drop to the bottom, in the midst of that here we have a gaggle of MPPs — I mean, the lowest salary among us here is \$78,000 a year. Let's make it clear: That's the base wage. The Tories, when they purported to engage in pension reform — and I don't quarrel with the fact that there was some pension reform — gave each and every MPP a raise in salary. They did. Mike Harris's Tories gave MPPs a salary increase, gave us a pay raise, and 78 grand is just for starters. All of the chairs of committees, the House leaders, the whips, the chairs of caucuses, the parliamentary assistants, the ministers — you're talking about additional stipends of \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000, \$25,000.

Here's Ms Ecker, Minister of Community and Social Services, expressing concern about poverty when she has a pretty health paycheque come the end of each and every month. She's got a paycheque that removes her from the realities of what it means to be a single mother with no income, forced to live on the allowance provided by the Family Benefits Act. She's removed from the despair of the homeless here on the streets of Toronto.

You know what's peculiar? I recall times when I called out knowing that this is a legislative broadcast and people get a chance to watch us. I recall calling out to people in the city saying, "Come on down to Queen's Park. Come to the committee rooms. Watch what's going on. Have a coffee on the house," so to speak, but you know what's incredible? Notwithstanding that here we are in this old wonderful building with all its nooks and crannies outside, you never see any homeless people huddled in

any of the warm spaces around Queen's Park. Why? Because they're removed, they're sent on their way. It's somehow unseemly to have homeless people seeking shelter here at Queen's Park, either around the building or in the park areas beside us. They're hidden from us by the towers of Bay Street. They're in the dirty alleyways off of Yonge and Sherbourne and what have you.

I say to Ms Ecker that I'll go with her. She can come with me. Let's go meet some of these people, because I know that the Tories, as habit, lock their doors — the doors of their offices here at Queen's Park, the doors of their constituency offices — to the poor or their advocates. Speak to any advocacy group. Speak to OCAP, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. Talk to them about the frustration they've experienced in trying to bring the reality of this to Tory MPPs, be they backbenchers or ministers. Maybe Ms Ecker would be well advised to abate some of her arrogance and take up the challenge to see what it's like to be poor here in the city of Toronto or quite frankly anywhere else in the province, to hear what it's like —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: No, not to find a job but to lose a job. We know, as I said, that unemployment is higher now than it was a mere year ago. There are simply more people without jobs. There aren't jobs to go to. Ms Ecker talks about the folks who left welfare into employment; she won't talk about how permanent those jobs are. Were they jobs for a week or two weeks? Were they jobs down there on Queen Street where you line up at 4 in the morning in the cold and in the damp and in the dew and in the fog wanting to know whether you're going to be hired that day on a delivery truck or in a warehouse or in a stevedore-type job? Are they jobs that pay even minimum wage?

Or are they the con jobs like the ads you see in the want ads? You've seen them, you've read them, "Call this number, send us a cheque for \$50 and we'll guarantee you \$150 a week." You've seen those ads; haven't you? They're sucker shots. They're con jobs, and the desperate send the 50 bucks in.

She won't talk about the permanence of the jobs, the quality of the jobs. She won't talk about the fact that people were going on welfare at the same time as her survey would tell us that, yes, a handful were coming off it. She won't talk about the fact that this government has absolutely no plan, no understanding of how to address the issue of poverty and joblessness, and quite frankly no interest in developing one. They simply don't give a damn.

I'm convinced their goal is to see the number of poor increase larger and larger. That's what it's all about, because the more folks you've got unemployed, the easier it is to reduce wages in this province. This government's indicated it's committed to effectively reducing the minimum wage by letting it stagnate so that the passage of time and inflation can erode the minimum wage to the point where it's reduced.

This government's indicated, with candour, with pride, its commitment to reducing work standards and protection for working people. It's been unabashed in its proclamation of its desire, its goal, to reduce the standards of

working conditions for workers here in the province of Ontario. It's an attack on the Employment Standards Act and there's more to come. There's more down the tubes.

This government is intent on unravelling protection for workers and compensation for workers through a workers' compensation system. I met just yesterday with the Office of the Worker Adviser down in Thorold and a good 30, 35 community people representing any number of organizations who, with some fear, were concerned about the prospect of the Office of the Worker Adviser being downsized or quite frankly eliminated. I think that's in the books. That's in the cards. It's coming down the track.

I'm not as sure as some of the other members here that I'm going to be supporting this motion.

I'm going to be quite candid with you, Speaker. The opposition parties here are small in numbers. The Tories have got a caucus that's so big that these poor folk over here are in the rump. This is the gulag of the Tory caucus over here to my left. I know what you had to do in my old caucus, in the last government, to go to the gulag. I'm not quite sure yet what these folks did to find themselves in the gulag. What do you have to do in Mike Harris's government?

For Chris Stockwell, he got made Speaker. But I say to my 20 or so colleagues to my left, there can only be one Speaker. I'm sorry, guys. Chris Stockwell was one of a kind. I don't know what's in store for you. Mrs Marland is still waiting her turn. Just watch, if Stockwell screws up, Mrs Marland will be back on the ballot quick as a bullet.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Plenty of time.

Mr Kormos: That's right, there's plenty of time. Chris has been not bad so far. I think he's performed well.

We've got a Tory caucus here — we know there are cracks. We don't have Bill Murdoch, the Tories do, and I'm glad the Tories have Bill Murdoch. People have spoken about —

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): You're in trouble now.

Mr Klees: Bill Murdoch is my friend. He shows a courage and an integrity that quite frankly are not equalled among some of his colleagues. Bill Murdoch is not afraid to speak up. He knows there's only one Speaker to be elected from the Tory caucus. Murdoch knows he may well pay a price with his leader, but he'll reap his reward with his constituents.

1730

I know there's dissent in the Tory caucus over issues like VLTs. Some Tory caucus members think they've been had, they've been hoodwinked, they've been taken. They got sold a bill of goods. They were told by the spin doctors, whoever does that work out of the Premier's office, and those ubiquitous overhead projectors and the cellophane transparencies, and there were the numbers on VLTs, and oh, it was such benign language: video lottery terminals. It sounded sort of like Pac-Man.

That was the purpose of calling them video lottery terminals. You should have heard the members of those committees: "Don't you dare call them slot machines. Mr Chair, don't let those opposition members call them slot machines." They were squealing and carrying on and they

were just rabid at the prospect that we were referring to them as slots, which is what they are.

Tory backbenchers increasingly have been targeted by people in their own communities, confronted by picket lines or other imaginative forms of protest against this government's ultra-right-wing policies. I know there is more than one Bill Murdoch in that Tory caucus. There are other Tories who are as interested in being re-elected as Bill Murdoch is. Bill Murdoch is going to get re-elected. I have no hesitation in saying that.

I know folks up in his community. I know him. Look, I know that there are people who are not Tories who vote for Bill Murdoch because they admire his courage; they admire his honesty. They see his courage, his honesty, his integrity as being unique on the Tory benches.

In fact, people in his community regard Bill Murdoch as an exception among the Tory caucus, and I have no hesitation in saying that Bill Murdoch is going to get re-elected.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I don't know. It's a little riding to take that.

Mr Kormos: Well, maybe not to the provincial Legislature, but Bill Murdoch will do just fine. I can't say that about a whole number of other Tory backbenchers.

It's remarkable that in my relatively short career this is now the third government I've witnessed and been involved with — I was going to say, "been in opposition to here at Queen's Park." But here we are and, honest, we've seen some of the older members like Sean Conway, who spoke before I did, and his colleague Gerry Phillips come and go. I saw Peterson's Liberal government here with a rump of its own, and God, they were cocky and arrogant and they knew it all and they followed marching orders and they were whipped oh, so readily and they were the trained seals with the balls on their noses.

But come election time, by God, they were gone. Speaker, it was the same attitude, some of the same language, the same cockiness and arrogance I've seen among some of these Tory backbenchers. Did I see it among the New Democrats in the last government? You bet your boots I did. You were here too. You saw it. You and I had more than a couple of conversations saying: "Look, you people should be a little more cautious. It is not some sort of divine right to hold a seat here at Queen's Park."

There's no secret about the fact that the New Democrats were defeated in the last election. But I tell you that if any of these Tories are thinking about making this chamber a career other than the briefest of careers of perhaps three and a half, four or four and a half years, some of these backbenchers had better start to change their tune awful quickly. I tell you, people are regarding them with an increasing scepticism, with an increasing concern about whether these Tory backbenchers are actually representing the views and the concerns and the wishes of the real Ontario or whether they're but hacks, taking their paycheques, 78 grand a year minimum, starting point, vying for positions of yet greater stipends, be it PAs or chairs of committees, and ready to do whatever they're told to do, whether it's the right thing or not, whether it's moral or not, whether it's fair or not,

whether it's just or not, just that they can keep collecting a paycheque.

I'm not going to be supporting this supply bill because I think the job of opposition members is to express their opposition to this government in every way, shape and form and, in conjunction with the masses of people on the street tomorrow, the hundreds of thousands who are going to be here in Toronto, to bring this government down as quickly as we can. If by some happenstance, oh, perhaps the inability of the whip to bring its members out, we can bring this government down all the sooner, I say all the better, because every day of this government is inflicting damage on this Ontario that will take decades to recover from and to restore.

I'm not as enthusiastic about this bill as my colleagues are. I think this is a chance for opposition members to let the government know that people out there are saying no to this government in no uncertain terms.

Mr Marchese: I'm very pleased to speak on this resolution in supply.

Before I get into some of my comments, my colleague from Welland-Thorold, when he was talking about what constitutes a nuisance, said if the Speaker of the House owned a BMW and someone scratched it, that would constitute a nuisance and it would be a legal problem, it would be a mischief. I agree with that, except that if the reference may have been connected to the member for Riverdale — I don't think it was, but if it were — I just want for the record to say that she doesn't own a BMW, but the member for Riverdale would get awfully angry if somebody scratched up her bike. I wanted to say that for the record on behalf of my colleague from Riverdale.

I want to talk about aspects of the supply bill as it relates to the policies of the Tories and as it touches on the issues of jobs. There may have been another speaker earlier who talked about the promise this government has made to create 140,000 jobs a year. It was a commitment that I believe they're convinced about and that they believed would happen. The problem is, we're not seeing that. The problem is that it's all a myth because we are not seeing the kind of job creation that they spoke about, that they wanted the people of Ontario to believe would happen.

The fact of the matter is that we had some statistical information a couple of days ago that talked about jobs. It says that nationally the unemployment rate rose from 9.4% to 9.9%. In Ontario, where two thirds of the jobs were lost, the rate jumped from 8.5% to 9.2%. That's the reality we have in Ontario. The government speaks very proudly and smugly and with the usual arrogance about how many jobs they've created, but what we've seen here in Ontario is an increase in losses of jobs, an increase in unemployment, which jumped from 8.5% to 9.2%, and they speak very happily and smugly about that. I think it's a problem, Mr Speaker. I think you think it's a problem. Not only that, I think the unemployed believe that's a problem.

When we speak about numbers, the Tories speak abstractly about the great things they're doing. But concretely when we talk about unemployment, we're talking about people, families. We're talking about men and women and the children some of these couples have.

We're talking about real people who are affected by the fiscal policies of governments in general.

1740

I have to tell you, in my walks in my riding, nobody speaks with cheer about the unemployment rate. I see the unemployment rate staying at very high levels. I see them hovering around 9.5%, 10% for a long time. I see that the policies of this government are not working. They can talk with galloping glee about the great things they're doing, but it's not at all convincing those who are affected by the policies. I wonder who on that government side is worried about the unemployed. It's causing a great deal of psychological pain to people who are unemployed, but more importantly, it's causing a great many economic negative effects for those families who don't have the same means as they might have had they been employed. I tell you, it's a problem.

The Tories talk about how Ontario is open for business. They talk about how great they feel about the marketplace and how happy they are to get out of the business of almost everything and allow the marketplace and the private sector to take over, but when you look at the unemployment statistics, I'm not sure I would want to leave it in the hands of the marketplace.

This government and the Liberal government federally have supported free trade agreements in the past. All the free trade proponents, in this House provincially, and federally talked about the thousands and thousands of jobs that free trade would create. As I go around my riding, I ask people: "Have you seen the jobs that the proponents of free trade said would flow from free trade? Have you seen them?" They don't see it. The unemployed don't see it. People on social assistance don't see it. People who are working for a very minimum wage don't see it.

Recall the debate in the Mulroney days about free trade, when he talked about prosperity. The Tories love that word, loved saying their policies were going to bring prosperity to the province and nationally, but I haven't seen it. What free trade has brought us are fewer jobs. But we were led to believe by the bigger corporations and the mouthpieces, usually Tories and many Liberals, that it was going to bring prosperity and it was going to bring jobs to the province of Ontario and to Canada. The fact of the matter is, it hasn't worked. Globalization of the economy is supposed to help Ontario bring more prosperity, more jobs to this province, but it's not working. I don't see it.

GATT is an agreement that is worldwide. It's very much like the North American free trade agreement. It's the same thing. The GATT organization and the North American free trade agreement are supposed to bring greater prosperity and jobs. I don't see it. What we're seeing, what real people can see out there, are what people call the McJobs, McDonald's type of little things, or jobettes, all little service jobs that people are getting now. They're not bad in and of themselves, but I tell you, they're not great. It's by and large minimum wage. This globalization, this North American free trade agreement, these GATT agreements that world leaders are agreeing to are creating jobettes, little jobs that pay little money. What we're seeing is people losing their earning power

and their spending power. Everybody else sees it except the Tories, especially those who drive in limousines. They don't see it at all, because they're too encased in their little offices and in their little cars to see the reality of the real world.

The Tories have another great scheme, and that's the income tax cut. They're very proud of it. They never answer our questions, as those of you who watch question period know. The ministers, without exception, never answer the question directly. Why? Because they know there is no good answer to the tax cut. When we point out that 60% of the income tax cut goes to 10% of the wealthier population, they don't respond to that. All they want to try to do is to convince the upper middle class and middle class that they're going to get a big tax break, and it's already happened. In talking to people in my riding, when I ask them, "Have you seen the tax cut?" they haven't seen it. That's because, by and large, we're dealing with people who don't earn a lot.

If you don't earn a lot of money and you only make \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000, you're not seeing that tax break. But if you're the president of one of the five or six major banks, where you're making \$1.9 million, by the end of the 30% tax cut, that individual is going to make \$100,000 to \$120,000 a year. That's where the money's going. It's not going into the pockets of the ordinary person, of the ordinary taxpayer who's making \$25,000 or \$30,000. He or she is not seeing a penny of that, because they are not getting much of that. That's the answer of this government.

When we point out that they've got to find billions, up to \$10 billion or up to \$20 billion, to service this tax cut, and we point out that they've got to find that money somewhere and that this "somewhere" has meant cuts to education, health and welfare, they deny it or they don't speak to the issue at all. They avoid it. Those who watch television will know that the members of government, the ministers in particular, never answer the questions specifically, in the way that we ask the questions, in the way that we say, "This will have some serious negative effects on our economy and on our services." But people see that.

I was talking to somebody today who said she turned on the television the other day, and she doesn't watch television regularly, but she said she was incredibly frustrated by one of the ministers not answering the question. It was the Minister of Labour. We kept on saying, "Answer the question," that our critic was raising. Over and over again, we kept on saying, "Answer the question." She, a skilled person who knows how to be completely evasive all the time, never answers the questions, because if she did, she would have to tell the truth. She would have to respond to the truth on all the questions that are raised around labour, the Employment Standards Act in particular, where they've massacred the Employment Standards Act and the minister denies it. The minister says, "We haven't touched that." Almost she says that with a straight face. It really puts me into a great deal of pain to see. She says, "No, we haven't affected that." Our critic says, "But you have," and enumerates a long list on where they have, and she denies

it every time. It boggles the intelligence of most human beings.

Mr Christopherson: It insults their intelligence.

Mr Marchese: It boggles the mind, and you're quite right, it insults their intelligence. It insults ours certainly on this side.

The private sector, on whom the Conservatives rely a great deal — and the Liberals to the same extent, because the Liberals federally say, "Oh, we don't create jobs." Before M. Chrétien got elected, he said: "Jobs, jobs, jobs. Elect us and we'll create them." Then he gets elected and says, "Oh, we don't do it; the private sector does." The Conservative government says the same thing: "We don't create jobs; the private sector does." What's the private sector doing? The private sector is downsizing. And although some are realizing the error of their ways, many are still committed to it, like the government.

We have an interesting example that I read in the paper just the other day of Al Dunlap, the former chief of Scott Paper. He told Newsweek he had little choice but to fire 11,000 people, 35% of his workforce, before walking away with a pay package of about \$100 million. This is fascinating stuff. People get paid to downsize because they say it makes them more efficient, firing thousands and thousands of people going into a very weak economy where they're not picked up either by government or a private sector that's expanding, because the private sector is not expanding; they're being laid off.

The government says, "We should act like a corporation." So what does the government do? It says, "We're about to fire 13,000 people as well." Why? Because, they argue, it makes us more efficient.

I have to ask the public — it's pointless asking the members of government because either they're not listening or they're so ideologically bent to the right that they are unable to straighten their thoughts about it; they can't really respond to this — do you really believe that the policies of these corporations to downsize to the extent that they are are working? Secondly, who worries about those people who become unemployed? Thirdly, do you believe it's right for a chief, such as the one from Scott Paper and the like, to be able to fire thousands of people and then retire with millions and millions of dollars as part of their paycheque, as part of their contribution to firing thousands of people? Do you believe, general public, that's right? Do you then, to the same extent, believe that when this Conservative government fires — they say 13,000, but we believe it's in the range of 20,000, if not, by the middle of their term, 25,000. Do you believe that's a good thing?

1750

Yes, you might think that some of these civil servants shouldn't be there and in some cases it might be a good thing. But when this government decides it's going to fire up to 25,000 people, do you believe that sending them off to the unemployment roll is the answer, or subsequently to the welfare system as the other answer? I'm sure you don't believe that's the answer.

Where are they going to find the jobs when we've seen that here in Ontario the unemployment rate has gone from 8.5% to 9.2%? Who do you see picking those people up? The private sector is not doing it. Government

has abdicated its responsibility because they say, "We want to be meaner and tougher, and we just want to get rid of people because we think we're too fat." That's all fine, but if that's the case, who is looking after those individuals?

These are men and women, not statistics, not mathematical figures, but real people who want to work, who need to work to feed themselves and, if they have families, to feed their families. Who raises those questions, and who takes care of those people?

Interjection: That's a rhetorical question.

Mr Marchese: It's not a rhetorical question whatsoever. It is an important question, a question that I know you, the listener, are raising and that politicians should be raising. If governments are not playing that role of worrying about what happens to people, who does? If governments abdicate their responsibility, who is left to look after people? When this Conservative government talks about individuals needing to pull up their bootstraps and start looking after themselves and they lose the sense of what we concern each other about and what we as communities have to do to protect our interests as communities, who worries about that?

I'll tell you, individualizing politics is not the answer, Mr Speaker. I know you're having a hard time with this, because I can see it in that quizzical look of yours, that squinting look. I know you're puzzled by it, because although you're the Speaker and neutral, you still have tendencies to the right. That hasn't disappeared, I know. But I tell you, someone has got to worry about those people. Someone has to. You, as the Speaker, would understand, because your role is to worry about all of us in this House, particularly the opposition parties, who are in a minority situation here. You understand the meaning of concern for all members, not just the government, isn't that correct? Yes, you nod approvingly. Of course it's correct.

Just as you play that role to regulate the business of this House, if the government doesn't play the role of regulating poverty and regulating wealth and redistributing it in ways that everybody can live with dignity, if the government doesn't do that, who will? It would be akin to you saying, "Sorry, opposition parties, you in particular, third party, I'm not going to worry about you because I've got a lot of government members to worry about," or "I'm just going to worry about some individuals but not the whole collective here." That would be a problem. You couldn't do that. You would be changing the role of the Speaker's office. You can't do that.

That's what we're talking about. We're talking about a government taking \$8.5 billion — and they've announced further cuts — out of the economy. The government is an important player in the economy. You take \$8.5 billion out of the economy and you're going to hurt it. More and more economists are saying that what the Liberals are doing federally by laying off 40,000 civil servants and what you are doing by firing civil servants and by taking \$8.5 billion out of the economy is creating an incredibly weak economy. You are creating an incredible problem, an economy where people are taken out of the market, because when you take money out of the market you're taking people out of their jobs.

That's what you're doing. Every time you make a cut it's not just a program that disappears; it is a person who's running the program who disappears as well. When you cut at the municipal level, they are throwing people out of work and the organizations funded by them are throwing people out of work. What you are doing is weakening the economy. Wages are down, people are out of work, free trade isn't working, your tax cut is failing, and as a result we see higher unemployment in this province. It's gone from 8.5% to 9.2% in Ontario.

The Conservative policies of this province are failing the people of Ontario, not just us here in opposition. They're failing the people of Ontario. What we're seeing is that people are being hurt and they're organizing the Days of Action as a protest against Mike Harris and the policies of this government.

His policies are hurting real people and they are responding to that hurt. We're going to see great numbers of people on the streets on Friday and Saturday, and the

government can dismiss them as interest groups, but I think that movement is going to grow, and they will have to worry in the next couple of years as the movement grows.

I abhor the policies of this government and I think these policies are hurting us and I hope the people of Ontario are going to teach this government a lesson, and I hope not too far in the near future.

With that comment, Mr Speaker, I know there's a vote on this resolution, so I will end my comments thus. Thank you for your attention.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Any comments or questions? Are the members ready for the question?

Mr Eves has moved government notice of motion number 10. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Monday 28 October 1996

Lundi 28 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

THOMAS IDE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I rise today to pay tribute to a man who had an extraordinary influence on many of us in Thunder Bay, but who will always be remembered province-wide as the father of educational television in the province of Ontario; in fact, the visionary who created TVO some 30 years ago. Last week, Mr T.R. "Ran" Ide passed away at the age of 77.

Born Thomas Ranald Ide in 1919 in Ottawa, he attended high school in St John, New Brunswick, and went on to earn a degree in economics and serve in the air force during the Second World War. After the war, he became a high school teacher in Port Arthur and eventually became principal of Port Arthur Collegiate Institute which, to my good fortune, included my first year in high school.

But it was what he accomplished after that period in his life that had such a positive impact on almost everyone in Ontario. Responding to a call from then-education minister Bill Davis, he set about creating TVOntario, turning it into the internationally recognized symbol of educational and cultural excellence that it is today. By the time he retired from his position as head of the network in 1979, TVO was a truly province-wide network and the world's largest producer of educational television.

All of us in Ontario owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr Ide, but it would be remiss of me not to tell you of the personal qualities that defined this fine man. His charm, warmth and sense of optimism were treasured and will be remembered by all who came in touch with him. All of us in the Ontario Legislature today pay tribute to Ran Ide and pass our condolences on to his wife and family. He will not be forgotten.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): It was one heck of a special interest group on the streets of Toronto on Saturday. Whether it was 100,000, 150,000 or 200,000, the fact is that it filled the streets of Toronto all the way from the Exhibition grounds through to here at Queen's Park.

I was proud to be among them, along with a whole lot of other folks from Welland-Thorold. Let me tell you, the Golden Horseshoe Social Action Committee, trade unionists, other workers, senior citizens, students, their

children, their parents, a complete cross-section of communities across this province, and Welland-Thorold was as representative as any of them.

What was most notable — the Tories had better take heed — were the large numbers of teachers and health care workers, tens and tens of thousands of front-line teaching professionals, front-line health care workers, all of whom had a very single message, and that was that any claim by this government that there haven't been deep and serious cuts to both education and health care is nothing but absolute and utmost hogwash.

The fact is that this government simply cannot carry on as it has without expecting escalating actions like we saw here in the city of Toronto. The fact is that working people, people who receive their services, are simply not going to tolerate the Harris cutting and slashing, are not going to tolerate the cuts, which we know are all in the name of and for the sake of tax breaks for the richest in this province. There will be a province-wide general strike in this province, mark my words.

GREEK CELEBRATIONS

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I rise today to bring to the attention of all members of this House that today is a special day for the Canadian Greek community, a day to commemorate the heroism of Greek soldiers and to mourn those who lost their lives fighting for their native land.

In 1940, Greece was forced into the Second World War by an invasion by the armed forces of Mussolini's Italy. The Greek army was successful in holding off the invaders until April 1941 when the Nazis also invaded. The occupation lasted until October 1944 and was marked by great heroism on the part of the Greek people. The day on which freedom was regained is known as Oxi Day. Oxi means no, signifying that the Greek people said no to their fascist invaders.

We are thankful today for an independent and vital Greece, a proud member of the international community. We celebrate also the indelible contributions made to this province by Ontarians of Greek descent. On behalf of the government of Premier Mike Harris, I take this opportunity to join with all Greek Ontarians in paying tribute to those brave men and women who fought to protect their country's freedom.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I stand today to speak to the Days of Action that took place last Friday and Saturday. The cynicism and the arrogance of the Premier and his government are quite astounding. He was

quoted as saying this weekend, "If you took away all the government employees, the other four or five had a point to make." The Premier thinks that he can dismiss the tens of thousands of people who gathered at Queen's Park as special interest groups. I was there on Friday and Saturday, and I have a message for the Premier: You cannot dismiss them so easily. This was not just a labour rally; this was a people's rally.

The crowd was not made up of just union leaders and special interest group leaders; it was made up of people of all ages, of concerned people. It was made up of parents who had seen their youngsters lose professional teachers from their schools, children who had lost their opportunity to go to junior kindergarten, child care workers, high school students, college and university students, co-op groups, seniors worried about their housing and medical services, coalitions of food banks, the homeless, the disabled, nurses worried about the future of quality health care — in short, the people who work and contribute to this province every day in attendance. These people came from all parts of the province, not just the immediate area. Some travelled for hours, some for a day, on their own time, at their own expense, to send a message of caution to this government.

Take note that the largest number of people at the rally were there because they were deeply concerned about the future of education under this government. To dismiss this rally out of hand is to dismiss the people you claim to represent.

BICYCLING SAFETY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Last Tuesday, at 8 am, cyclists gathered for the fourth time in as many months at the site of yet another fatal cycling accident. The mourners gathered together to share their sorrow and to again draw attention to the lack of safety for cyclists on Ontario roads.

Nineteen ninety-six has seen the following cycling deaths in the city of Toronto: February 13, Keefe MacLaverty in a car collision; July 22, Erin Krauser crushed by a truck; July 31, Martha Kennedy crushed by a truck; August 15, Nick Scollozzi in a hit-and-run by an impaired driver; October 15, Karen McGibbon sideswiped into a lamppost by a van. All of these accidents were preventable.

I congratulate the efforts of Advocacy for Respect for Cyclists and the many others who have been requesting a coroner's inquest into these tragic deaths since July. The memorial events are making sure that these unnecessary deaths do not go unreported or unnoticed.

I ask you, and cyclists in the east gallery ask you, what possible excuse can there be for not proceeding with an inquest after so many unnecessary deaths?

1340

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I welcome this opportunity to update my colleagues on the Premier's initiative aimed at promoting, encouraging, supporting and nurturing the spirit of voluntarism in Ontario.

As parliamentary assistant to the Premier, I have worked with a volunteer advisory board to create a multiphase investigative and consultative process. The first step involved a one-day session to help define some of the challenges and issues affecting the future of voluntary action. The second step was a three-day search conference to define a desirable future for voluntary action in Ontario.

The results of this conference were recently discussed by approximately 350 participants representing a cross-section of the public in 10 communities across the province. This consultation process on voluntary action in the province was guided by an expert facilitator, but the results were defined by the participants in a series of round table discussions and workshops covering the issues, challenges, strategies and recommendations from the earlier search conference.

I want to thank the staff of the voluntary sector projects, the volunteer members of the advisory board on the voluntary sector and the hundreds of people who participated in the recent consultation process on voluntary action. I look forward to receiving the final report and the recommendations on what various stakeholders and our government can do.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): This weekend the province of Ontario witnessed an unprecedented protest. Saturday, tens of thousands of Ontarians gathered in front of this Legislature to protest the slash-and-burn policies of the Mike Harris government. One of the main reasons people gathered in Toronto was to protest the continued attack which Mike Harris and Jim Wilson have launched against Ontario's health care.

All Ontarians — seniors, adults and children — have begun to feel the effects of the Tory bulldozer as it plows through health services in Ontario. We have seen this government impose new user fees for drugs; slash over \$1 billion from our hospitals, laying off 15,000 nurses; appoint an unelected hospital restructuring commission mandated to close hospitals in communities across this province. Unfortunately, these cuts are only the beginning as the government implements its harmful 30% income tax cut.

People came to protest and tell Mike Harris how his cuts are hurting people across this province. Although he does not want to hear how these cuts are hurting everyday people, the Premier cannot refuse to listen to his employers, the taxpayers of Ontario. I say to the Premier, you do not have all the answers. Listen to the people you represent. You cannot dismiss their concerns. Stop the harmful cuts to health care and make meaningful changes to create a real health care system.

CHILD CARE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Child care is at stake in Ontario. Today I want to direct my statement to Community and Social Services Minister Janet Ecker. Since your government does not want to consult with the people who have the most at stake in quality child care, I would like to share with you concerns from child care

workers and families in my riding concerning your government's child care review, which recommends lowering standards of child care in Ontario.

People in my riding are strongly against your gradual reductions in funding for non-profit child care. You plan to eliminate payments made to child care workers and re-invest part of this money in subsidized child care spaces. What does this really mean? It means that workers who earn on average less than \$20,000 a year will have their wages cut by almost \$5,000. Your government's reforms are nothing more than an attempt to drive down wages at the expense of children and child care workers.

I strongly support the initiative of the directors of the Centre de garde d'enfants de Hearst for their information campaign held last week to fully educate the public about the negative impacts of your child care review recommendations.

The Ontario New Democratic Party is holding hearings across the province on this issue because we recognize the hard work of child care workers, because we want to give parents a say and because we care about our children and their future.

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Imagine a 13-year-old boy who every day at precisely 8:30 pm puts his pajamas on, brushes his teeth at 8:45 and is in bed at 9 o'clock; not a minute before, not a minute after. This kind of routine or insistence on sameness is quite common in autism, and if the routine is changed slightly it can affect his life and make him upset.

October is Autism Awareness Month. Autism is a developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. Autism and its associated behaviours occur in 15 out of every 10,000 individuals and are more prevalent in boys than girls. It interferes with normal development of the brain in the area of reasoning, social interaction and communication skills. The disorder makes it hard for them to communicate with others and relate to the world outside.

Autism is a very complex disorder and the needs of individuals vary greatly. Traditional and contemporary approaches are enabling us to understand and treat these individuals. Parents and professionals are beginning to realize that the symptoms of autism are treatable. There are many interventions that can make a significant difference.

The logo for the national parent support group is a picture of a child embedded in a puzzle. Most of the pieces of the puzzle are on the table, but we are still trying to figure out how they all fit together.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I wonder if it really is a point of privilege, but I just wanted, on behalf of all members of the assembly, to congratulate you and the staff for the sense of equity that you demonstrated in dealing with the protesters and the people who participated in the Days of Action at this Legislature. We appreciate the effort that was made to accommodate everyone concerned.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'll consider that a point of privilege today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to take this time to introduce and have you welcome the seventh group of pages to serve in the 36th Parliament of Ontario: Jacqueline Bucker, Durham East; Jennifer Bond, Frontenac-Addington; Matthew Campbell, Hamilton West; Dillon Charron, Fort York; Sarah De Bruyn, Etobicoke-Rexdale; Sarah Donnelly, Simcoe West; Kevin Dorgan, Scarborough-Ellesmere; Martin Fox, High Park-Swansea; David Homuth, Mississauga West; Sarah Hugh, Mississauga North; Karishma Kabani, Don Mills; Lauren Kennedy, St Catharines; Tara Lounsbury, Essex South; Jonathan Mar, York Centre; Andrew J.D. McGuire, Elgin; Joshua McNorton, Windsor-Walkerville; Aidan Morton, Lanark-Renfrew; Kathryn Mouriopoulos, Hamilton Mountain; Curtis Pinnegar, Muskoka-Georgian Bay; Salsabil Rabbani, Scarborough Centre; Sabrina Ramnarine, St George-St David; Daphne Townsend, Wellington; Michael Vanzandwyk, Hastings-Peterborough; and Mark Wilson, Niagara South.

We'd like to welcome you all and hope you enjoy your stay.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Premier, I'll place my first question to the Minister of Health.

Minister, on Saturday some tens of thousands of Ontarians, and some would say as many as 200,000, marched on Queen's Park to send your government the message that you are on the wrong track. The Premier, when he isn't busy making jokes about people's legitimate right to protest, has said that no one should be upset because you are just doing what you promised you would do.

So I ask you, where in the Common Sense Revolution — on which page, which paragraph, which line, which sentence; show me — did it say that you would cut hospital funding by \$1.3 billion? Where does it say that you would close up to 50 hospitals and take 13 million nursing hours of care a year away from patients? Where does it say any of these things?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): We made it clear, I say to the honourable member, certainly in anything I've said in the last six years, much of that time as Health critic and now as Minister of Health, that restructuring is long overdue. In fact, the Liberal Party has made those statements in this House and so have members of the NDP. The previous two governments launched 60 restructuring studies across the province and spent \$26 million, and local communities have developed those plans. Now it's time to implement those plans, and that's what the Health Services Restructuring Commission is doing.

Mrs McLeod: Nice try, Minister, but the fact is we all remember the Premier very clearly saying, when asked if he was planning to close hospitals, "I have no plans to close hospitals." So he is now doing what he promised he would not do, because hospitals are closing across this province as a direct result of the cuts to the hospital budgets. We're seeing the true face of the Common Sense Revolution now.

People in Owen Sound saw the true face of the Common Sense Revolution when it comes to hospital closures late last week when they found out that they were, in Grey-Bruce Regional Health Centre, going to be losing yet another ward in their hospital. This time it is an entire medical-surgical ward. They found out that some 80 to 90 jobs are going to be taken out of their small community. The hospital does not say, contrary to all of your pronouncements, that they're taking this drastic measure to improve service or to streamline surgeries. They say they are doing it for one reason and one reason only, and it is because of your \$4-million cut to their hospital.

So I ask you again, when did the people of Owen Sound and the Grey-Bruce region give you and your government a mandate to rip the heart out of their community hospital? When did they say: "Go ahead. Jeopardize our health so that you can have more money for your tax cuts"?

Hon Mr Wilson: I remind the honourable member of two facts that will face the test of time and be well known perhaps in the future, but will be well recorded in the annals of history in this country.

It's the federal Liberal government that is cutting health care, that has cut \$2.1 billion and ripped the heart from health care funding in the province of Ontario. The Prime Minister was saying on the weekend, "Medicare 'Squeeze' Needed," and admitting that he's cut several billion dollars out of the territories and provinces; \$2.1 billion in the province of Ontario.

I remind the people of Ontario that the Liberals promised on five or six occasions in their red book a \$17-billion health care budget. I'm proud that this government didn't cut the \$400 million they campaigned on. We've increased the health care budget by \$300 million so that today it's \$17.7 billion.

Mrs McLeod: Nice try again, Minister, but there are a few things that you're missing in your historical accounting. One is the fact that the now Premier knew full well what the federal transfers would be when he made his commitments during the election campaign. In fact, he cheered them on and he still said, "I have no plans to close hospitals in the province of Ontario." Now we are seeing hospitals closed right across this province, and they are closing because of your \$1.3-billion starvation budget cuts to our hospitals.

I think it comes back to what you're doing. We keep wanting to take you back to the reality of the impact of the cuts you're making and the closures of hospital beds, and in the case of Grey-Bruce the closure of a medical-surgical unit, because when you cut the surgical beds, which is what they are now forced to do, you cut the number of surgeries they can do in that hospital. That means the people of Owen Sound are going to have to

wait longer for their surgery or they're going to have to drive someplace else while they are sick in order to go on a waiting list to get their surgery somewhere else.

It's also true that when you shut down 90 jobs in a town the size of Owen Sound, you have a devastating effect on the economy with some 40 cents more, for every dollar that you've taken out, coming from small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mrs McLeod: I ask you again, when did the people of Owen Sound or of any community in the province of Ontario give you a mandate to rip \$1.3 billion out of their hospitals and to jeopardize patient care by shutting down surgical beds at —

The Speaker: Order. The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Wilson: My understanding of what's happening in Owen Sound is that they're developing a three-to-four-year plan to deal with the federal Liberals' health care cuts. I can understand that it's incumbent upon that community to have a three-to-four-year plan to deal with your party's cuts to health care, because we've not cut health care.

Secondly, to ensure that somebody is watching and ensuring that quality will be maintained and that the fearmongering that the honourable member is suggesting about gaps in services and greater lineups for surgery — to ensure all of that won't happen, we have to approve the operating plans. I've not seen an operating plan or a whisper of an operating plan from Owen Sound that would indicate such bad things are going to happen as the honourable member says. I know, because I live up there, that the people of Owen Sound are far more responsible. They won't create the gaps in services and they'll make sure that the people of Grey-Bruce have the services they need in spite of the federal Liberals' cuts.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the Minister of Education and Training, and again it has to do with this government not doing what it said it would do.

Minister, you promised not to cut classroom education. What we have seen when you broke that promise is cuts that have resulted in larger class sizes, in fewer teachers, in school closures, in librarians being laid off, and in some cases new user fees for students. Will you have the decency to do what neither the Premier nor the Minister of Health today have been prepared to do: Will you at least acknowledge the presence and the very real concerns of the tens of thousands of parents and students and teachers who have felt first hand your broken promise on classroom education and were out on Saturday to ask you to listen?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I think we have said on many, many occasions that we believe there needs to be more accountability in our school system in Ontario, that there needs to be a higher quality in terms of student achievement in the province of Ontario, and that it also must be a more affordable system.

Yes, in some cases we have been disappointed in the response of school boards in the province to a 1.8% reduction in funding last year. We have been disappointed in some of the responses by some of the boards. Not only have there been a few instances where classroom education may have been affected and should not have been, but there also have been tax increases at the local level that are not acceptable to this government. So we are now reviewing our funding model and our governance model to provide a better system for the people of Ontario. That is what this government is doing. It's what previous governments should have done.

Mrs McLeod: I'm trying to get the minister to address the very real concerns of thousands of parents, of students and of teachers. If the minister thinks that the crowd of thousands outside Queen's Park on Saturday was some kind of illusion or some vast special interest group, I want to tell him about some of the other people who are raising the same concerns in other communities across the province.

One of the groups that was out at a rally in Thunder Bay was a group called Mothers for Education. I think it's important to know that these are just ordinary parents who are concerned about their children, who have never been politically active before but who feel they must get a message to you. They had some very specific questions for you, Minister. They want to know how the so-called 1.8% budget cut that you've talked about again today actually became a 17.89% budget cut in Thunder Bay. They want to know why their children's class sizes are so large. They want to know why they are losing over 50% of their special education classes and why JK has been eliminated in so many areas. Can you tell the Mothers for Education why classroom education has been cut when you said it would not be?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I've had the pleasure of talking to parents right across this province, including in Thunder Bay, on a couple of different occasions and to talk about their concerns for making sure that we have an education system that meets the needs of students today and is affordable and responsible so that we can meet the needs of those students when they join the workforce. We are meeting those very critical areas.

In response to the question, we have made a reduction that province-wide is 1.8%. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about why there may have been more or less reductions as a percentage basis in the funding available to school boards across the province, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should look at the general legislative grant process, a process your government two governments ago had an opportunity to change, to make more fair, to provide a system where there aren't second-class students in the province. There are now because the funding mechanism is improper, and it was a funding mechanism you had under your government.

1400

Mrs McLeod: I have here about 200 letters from others who share the concerns of the Mothers for Education group in Thunder Bay. I'm going to send them over to you, Minister, because these are real people. They have names and addresses and they would like a direct response from you to their questions about why their

children are in classrooms that are larger, why they aren't getting the kind of education they believe their children should have. The Mothers for Education are concerned because, they say, "We feel our government is being less than honest," because you will not see the impact of your cuts.

Let me tell you about one more very specific, very real class. It's a grade 4 class in northeastern Ontario. It's a class that has 34 students and in that class of 34 there are 10 students with special needs, 10 students who have disabilities that range from spina bifida to cerebral palsy and others who have learning and behavioural difficulties, some of them with multiple disabilities. Surely you recognize this is too large a class even in Mike Harris's Ontario for either quality education or to meet the special needs of those 10 students. Minister, will you admit that you are not doing what you said you would do and that your cuts are affecting classroom education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: To the Leader of the Opposition, I will respond to letters, as we always do. I know how I'll respond. I'll respond with some pride in the initiatives that this government has taken in education, in improving education in Ontario, in having it be more accountable, be of higher quality and be more affordable. I make no apologies at all for our efforts in the past, over the past 15 months, or our efforts in the future; they will be focused on that. I hope the Leader of the Opposition when she responds to these mothers can explain why so much spending over the last decade has happened outside the classroom, can explain why you didn't change the structural system of education in the province so that students get a better deal and so that taxpayers get a better deal. Why didn't you make those changes? Because you didn't, we have to.

METRO DAYS OF ACTION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): In the absence of the Premier, I have a question for the Deputy Premier. I'm quite disappointed that in the wake of the Days of Action activities that took place this weekend, the Premier's not here today to account for his actions and his positions with respect to those days.

I want to say to you, Deputy Premier, that your government's refusal to listen as it cuts services to pay for its tax scheme has provoked one of the largest protests Canada and Ontario have ever seen, and yet the Premier categorized the weekend's events this way: He said, "If you took away all the government employees, the other four or five had a point to make." That kind of smugness and arrogance is what I want to ask you about. I want to ask you very clearly, is this attitude that we saw from the Premier over the weekend representative of the entire government, or is it just the Premier who is wallowing in his own smug contempt for the thousands of people who were out there on the weekend?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, I would just like to tell you, as the Premier and every member of this government has said on numerous occasions over the last several days, this government believes in the people's right to protest. People are permitted to do that, obvious-

ly, in our democratic society provided they do not do things unlawfully and do not interfere with the rights of others. We are constantly listening to what the people of the province have to say on many important issues in Ontario.

Mr Silipo: If the Premier felt, as the Deputy Premier is now telling us, that people have the democratic right to protest, that would have been helpful if that's what he had said, but what he said instead was to attack civil servants, to attack the people who were out there. He could have said it was an enormous protest, peaceful, imaginative, forceful, inventive. Instead he said, "...the banners going by from some of the Communist parties, as I saw, and I guess the Iraqi group (and) Iranian group." It's that kind of attitude that just continues to compound the problem, that paints everyone into narrow interest groups, when instead, what the Premier of this province should have been recognizing was that what we saw this weekend was the greatest interest group of all, and that is the people of the province speaking out.

You have divided Ontario between the haves and the have-nots and you are continuing to cause suffering upon suffering. What will it take, Minister, for your government to finally listen to the people who spoke so clearly this weekend?

Hon Mr Eves: There were many groups in society, some Ontarian, some not, represented in the protest over the weekend.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Well, that is a fact. However, what the honourable member didn't go on to say —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Eves: What the honourable member did not point out was that the Premier also went on to say in the course of the weekend and in the course of his remarks that the overwhelming majority of people present in the protest were representatives from the labour movement in the province of Ontario and that he respected their right to protest. I've already said that, as indeed have many members of this government, in the last few days.

Mr Silipo: Let me be very clear: The vast majority of people who were out there on the streets on Friday and Saturday were the people of the province from all walks of life.

I want to suggest to the Deputy Premier one very concrete step at least that he can take to show that he has listened to a small extent at least to what we heard on the weekend.

I want to salute, Mr Speaker, the comments that you made in response to the events this weekend. When you were asked if you would try to bill the demonstrators for the costs of the Queen's Park security, your response was: "It's the price of doing business, of running Queen's Park in a democracy. Frankly, anyone who would suggest that the tab should go to those people demonstrating is completely unfair." I want to applaud that attitude and I want to ask the Deputy Premier if he would take from that attitude and join me and join you in endorsing your words and join me in urging Alan Tonks and other Metro politicians to take exactly that kind of wise approach to supporting democracy, rather than to be looking at

launching wild-goose chase lawsuits against the organizers of the Days of Action. Would you do that, Deputy Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: The individuals he is referring to are at a different level of government, they have their own responsibilities and they will make their own appropriate decisions on what they choose to do.

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, there are many people who were out in the streets this weekend whom your Premier dismisses as special interest groups. One of those special interest groups, with a real special interest, are persons with disabilities. We heard a lot from your government about how you're going to stay the course and implement the Common Sense Revolution, but one of your promises was that aid to seniors and the disabled will not be cut.

Here with us today in the House is Mrs Pearl Miller. She's 79, she's got osteoporosis, she has collapsed vertebrae and serious asthma. She can't take regular transit. She has been using Wheel-Trans for over 10 years to go to necessary doctors' appointments and to get her groceries. As a result of your cuts, she has been informed that she is being cut off Wheel-Trans.

Minister, will you tell Mrs Miller directly today — because she is here — how you are keeping your promise to ensure that aid to seniors and persons with disabilities will not be cut?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): This government has been saying all along that we have to look for efficiencies and the municipalities are our partners in finding these efficiencies. But we also said we are very strongly committed towards Wheel-Trans. Wheel-Trans is something that this government did not cut, not one dollar. We basically said to the municipalities to go out and look for efficiencies in the conventional transit. I believe that we said right from the word "go" that we wouldn't cut Wheel-Trans. That was one of the reasons why this year we actually gave them the same budget they had last year. We didn't cut. The 1996 budget was not cut by one dollar. As for the people of the province of Ontario, they are looking for a government to deliver the services in the most cost-efficient way, and that is our commitment. I believe we are going to do that, and with a strong commitment to Wheel-Trans and disabled transit throughout the province of Ontario. 1410

Ms Lankin: She's heard all of that before. She wrote to Mike Harris, and Mike Harris, just as you did then and have before, blamed it on the TTC. She wrote the TTC. They blamed it on Mike Harris. She's caught in the middle of political finger-pointing.

Mrs Miller took Wheel-Trans here today. This could be her last ride. She wants to know why you don't step in and make sure these moneys are restored to the Wheel-Trans budget, the \$1.8 million you cut in the first place. As she put it this morning in her own words, and no one could say it better, "There's more to being the Minister of Transportation than fixing potholes."

You have a responsibility. You have a responsibility to seniors and persons with disabilities to live up to your promise. Will you step in and ensure that the TTC completely restores the Wheel-Trans budget?

Hon Mr Palladini: I'm somewhat disappointed that the member's attitude is always making references to the Harris government. The Harris government is doing what Ontarians want us to do: maintain the services that these people at Wheel-Trans require. The TTC, not the Harris government, runs Wheel-Trans. It's the TTC, from the initial go, that was spending money very foolishly, giving services that were well above what the cost should have been and not paying attention to operational costs. It's this government that's going to make sure that when we spend dollars we're going to spend them wisely so everybody in the province of Ontario who is disabled will get that service. We're going to keep protecting that.

Ms Lankin: You have an opportunity today to make sure that Mrs Miller gets her Wheel-Trans. What are you going to do about it? You just said you're going to make sure that happens. Your tax scheme, which is the reason why you have to make all these cuts, isn't helping her or the thousands of others who are being cut off; quite the opposite. Mrs Miller wants to talk to you. That's why she took Wheel-Trans down here today. Her Wheel-Trans is coming back for her at 3 o'clock, so she's going to leave the gallery here today at 2:30 and she's going to be waiting for you outside the west lobby doors because she wants to speak to you directly. Be prepared because she is angry, and rightly so. If she loses her Wheel-Trans, she will be completely housebound, and she thinks you and Mike Harris and your government are to blame. She wants you to take responsibility, just as you said, to ensure that this essential service for seniors and the disabled is maintained. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Palladini: Once again, I want to say that I'm very concerned that the mobility and accessibility needs of the people of Ontario are met. As far as Mrs Miller is concerned, I appreciate her concern and certainly I believe that this government has to make sure we are going to work with the municipalities to deliver the calibre of services people like Mrs Miller want. I have every intention of making sure people like Mrs Miller do get those services. But it was clearly the TTC, the Toronto Transit Commission, that chose to cut the funding on disabled transit, not the Harris government. It was the Harris government that made sure in the 1996 budget that the municipalities, like the TTC, were not going to be able to put the blame on the Harris government for something they did and created.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Can you explain how in recent weeks utilities like the Lincoln Hydro-Electric Commission down in the Niagara Peninsula have had to spend hundreds of thousands of ratepayers' dollars to fend off the incursions of Ontario Hydro into the mandate of the local utility? Lincoln Hydro, to name but one example, was given the authority by this Legislature a couple of years ago to fill out its municipal mandate.

Now Ontario Hydro is contesting the very thing this Legislature said we should be approving in a good and competitive way in the interests of local ratepayers. Why is Ontario Hydro down in the peninsula causing so much difficulty to a local electrical utility trying to provide good, efficient retail service to its customers?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I'm aware that there is some conflict between Hydro and the Lincoln local utility. I will do everything I can to endeavour to mediate between the two. Ontario Hydro, as you know, is an individual corporation which has its interests, and the local utility has its interests. I believe they will be resolved with regard to this particular conflict as time goes on.

Mr Conway: Whatever happened to that tough, "I'm in charge" Normie Sterling? Now he's just that diffident, wimpish Norm who has no —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): — parliamentary language, and "wimpish" is not one of the words.

Mr Conway: I apologize, Mr Speaker. If "wimpish" is unparliamentary, let me be the first to withdraw it.

Ontario Hydro is around and about the province behaving in an obviously unfair and discriminatory way. It's not just Lincoln Hydro, but it's Pembroke Hydro, London Hydro and scores of others. Where does Ontario Hydro get this mandate to be so aggressive in expanding its retail mandate at the very time the government of Ontario has a major report telling it that Hydro should be retreating from, not expanding into, the area of retail and distribution of electricity?

Hon Mr Sterling: The member well knows that Ontario Hydro gets its mandate from this Legislature, from this government, which has not touched the Power Corporation Act; from the previous government, which made some minor amendments to the Power Corporation Act; and from your former government, which did nothing with regard to the Power Corporation Act or the control of Ontario Hydro, even though you talked a big storm before you got there.

The fact of the matter is that this government is going to restructure Hydro. We're going to do that in a relatively short period of time, when these kinds of issues will be addressed head on, unlike any previous government has ever ventured to do.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Health. Towards the end of last week, on Friday, you said with regard to the doctors' ratification process that you didn't have a lot to say, that the process should proceed and that if the doctors rejected the agreement you'd get back to the bargaining table. You were very conciliatory and took the appropriate approach. On the weekend, you decided to call in reporters. You threatened the doctors, you said you'd act unilaterally, and now what you have done is put the agreement at even more risk that the doctors will reject it. Can you explain this bizarre behaviour, which at the end is putting patients at risk in this province?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member should know a lot more about negotiations

than he's just demonstrated in his question. On Friday, I thought the question from the media during the scrum was, "If the vote is extremely close, what would you do?" We would have to meet with the OMA. If this agreement, which I remind all members is not the full-blown agreement with the government — this is the first step in a process — essentially doctors would be saying to negotiating teams, "Go back and talk about the other issues that are to be dealt with in the time frame set in the joint statement." I want to make it clear that if doctors in the province think there's a better deal from the government at this time, there isn't. This is a very fair and reasonable deal which is the gateway to future negotiations. I make that clear again to you today, Mr Cooke.

1420

Mr Cooke: Maybe I don't know a lot about negotiations, but I know that when Chrysler or GM or any of the big corporations signs an agreement, a tentative deal, with their membership and their union they shut up and let the union, the membership, decide. You are interfering to the point where you have put this agreement at risk. It likely will be rejected and it'll be on your head, and patients will be put at risk because of your incompetence. Why are you doing this?

Hon Mr Wilson: Over the last two months this honourable member and other honourable members across the way have done more to frustrate doctors than anyone on this side of the House. Every time —

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): He's not the minister. You are.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): He's blaming everybody else again.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): He wants us to be the government.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Heaven forbid.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You've botched this from day one.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: Every time the opposition does all the "what ifs" — "What if this happens? What if that happens?" — my phone rings off the wall because they send out confusing messages. I've clarified, during a period where clarification was obviously needed from the types of calls —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister.

Mr Cooke: Let him answer. Just let him answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm waiting to be able to hear the minister. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: I have clarified on behalf of the government what the intent is. It's not helpful of the honourable members who have done every "what if" there is to possibly do a "what if" about over the last two months. Stirring the pot doesn't help the patients in your ridings. That's all I can tell you, and the proof is in the pudding as the phones ring off the wall every time the opposition stirs the pot. Doctors and patients don't deserve this.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Solicitor General. Minister, last Wednesday's Toronto Star stated that the federal government has invented 107 new bureaucratic positions in the Canadian Firearms Centre. The article says that these new bureaucrats will be busy licensing gun owners and registering their legally owned guns.

I fail to see how a bunch of bureaucrats licensing law-abiding gun owners are going to stop crime in Ontario. Can the minister clarify for this House the status of the constitutional challenge that Ontario and Alberta have launched against the ridiculous registration provisions of Bill C-68?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The member makes an important point which needs to be addressed. It's the government's view that the imposition of universal registration of firearms in Bill C-68 is beyond the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government. That's why we've joined with the province of Alberta in a constitutional challenge to the wrongheaded parts of this legislation.

This government supports real gun control. We support front-line police officers, not laws that force police officers off the front lines into pushing more paper. The announcement that was in the media last week indicated 107 additional bureaucrats — millions of tax dollars to further interfere with law-abiding citizens. This is another bureaucratic boondoggle that Liberals are famous for instead of policing and putting additional dollars into police front lines where they will have a real impact.

Mr Ouellette: Hunters, sportsmen, legitimate gun owners, want to know what the government has done to make some progress in speeding up the FAC process and what we are doing to process FACs faster so that law-abiding gun owners and hunters aren't delayed any longer than necessary in obtaining an FAC.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Members will recall when we assumed office that we kept a promise made in opposition by the Honourable Chris Hodgson with respect to grandfathering. The grandfathering period, following completion, we had about 149,000 applications. The backlog has been a chronic problem. When we assumed office, we were processing approximately 100 FACs per day. We have now increased that to 650. The backlog has been cut substantially, and we will continue to do everything we can to alleviate the backlog.

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton Centre, I'm finding it difficult to hear the question. I ask that you come to order.

Mrs Pupatello: Mr Minister, what if you finally received all of the documentation that you required to designate the Windsor and Essex county area underserved? Would you finally make that designation?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): We're reviewing the matter in ongoing discussions, and if all the documentations are in — there's a pretty good chance that they are in — we will make the determination as fast as possible.

Mrs Pupatello: I'd like to remind the minister that in fact he did receive all of the documentation at least two weeks ago, and at that time he received a letter from our district health council, which read, "I trust you do now have sufficient information to make that designation."

Several months ago — in fact, last fall — we asked you if you would move that along quickly, because you are well aware of the dire need that we have, not just for obstetricians but family practitioners as well as other key specialty areas.

Mr Minister, with all of the chaos that you've created in the system, we would dearly love to have that designation now. You've been quoted in Hansard, as late as October 21, as saying that in fact the real savings will be in the area of the underserved area program. Will you please confirm today that you will allow the underserved program to continue and that it will in fact benefit our area?

Hon Mr Wilson: With respect to the application, it always takes more than two weeks, and we are working on it as quickly as possible.

But isn't that the case that was just made? A program that was designed years ago under a Conservative government for the extreme north and really underserved area, now we have applications from across the 401 corridor right down to Windsor-Essex. Doesn't that tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that the status quo with respect to distribution in physician and doctor resources in this province can't hold up when a program that was made for northern Ontario is being requested through application by the people of Windsor-Essex at the extreme south of the province? The status quo is not an option, and this government, with the Ontario Medical Association, is trying to find more permanent solutions than the grant program called the underserved area program.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): To the Attorney General: The whole province has listened to the Attorney General's feckless defence of his mismanagement of the family support plan for day after day and week after week now, so we'd better be clear, and that is that women and their children who were receiving regular payments are no longer receiving them as a result of this Attorney General and this government closing regional offices and laying off almost 300 staff in FSP. The Attorney General hasn't fixed any of the old problems, but he has certainly created some new ones.

Let me tell you about Diane Ecker from Welland-Thorold. She received \$19.20 on October 1, 1996 — you see, she should have received \$175 — and two days before receiving that \$19.20, she received a letter from FSP saying that there would be no interruption in payment.

Cut me some slack, Speaker. I don't get up to ask questions very often.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Kormos: But there has been an interruption, because, you see, the payor, the father of the child, has been making his payments regularly to the FSP, and he's calling complaining that his paycheque isn't being forwarded on to his child. This woman's on family benefits and needs that money to buy groceries. What have you done with the money that Diane Ecker and her five-year-old child should be receiving?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I can tell you that the family support plan is issuing cheques as they come in. The cheques are being sent to those who are the recipients of the cheques. I can't comment and won't comment on the individual case that the member has brought to me, but if he wishes to discuss it with me and provide me with the details I am prepared to look into it.

1430

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, in fact that information is wrong. Let me tell you about a constituent in my riding, Deborah Matheson, and her child, who have been receiving regular payments for the last four years, \$700 a month like clockwork, until you closed the regional offices and laid off 290 staff. Last month her September payment was two weeks late and she still hasn't received her October payment. In fact she was told by one of your staff she may not get her October payment until some time in November.

Her ex-husband has been making the payments and has kept the family support plan completely aware of all his employment information. There aren't enough staff there to process it and to pass the cheques on. She's had to borrow money from her family in order to get by. She's written postdated cheques that are dated according to when her money should be received from the family support plan, so she's going to incur financial penalties when those cheques are returned NSF.

Minister, how much longer are women and children in this province expected to do without money for food and for lodgings and for necessary living expenses because of the mismanagement and the precipitous cost-cutting measures you have taken?

Hon Mr Harnick: The measures we have taken are measures that have been taken to repair long-standing difficulties with this plan. This plan has not been working for 10 years. This plan has been grossly in arrears in paying women and children. It has been a plan without any enforcement tools, and we are correcting that. We are creating a plan where people can have access and get the information they need when they need it, and we are working towards that in the restructuring of the plan that we're doing.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I understand you recently attended a Wines of Ontario official launch. I know you are aware of the importance of the wine industry in my riding. I understand that Ontario wines sales are doing very well here in Canada. Do you have any statistics detailing the growth of the Ontario wine industry?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for St Catharines-Brock for the question. Yes, I was very pleased to join the LCBO, the Wine Council of Ontario and the Vintners Quality Alliance to officially launch the Wines of Ontario promotion.

As the members of the House already know, the 1995 Ontario vintage has been held by many as the best ever and there's every reason to believe this deserved reputation will continue to soar. Ontario's wine sales are soaring. Last year the LCBO sales of Ontario wines grew by 9%, and in the first six months of 1996 the sales increased by another 16%.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): This is a minister's statement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I say to the members of the opposition, you may consider this a minister's statement. It matters not. The question's put. It needs to be answered, and I prefer to hear it. Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon, if you have a point of order I ask you stand and raise it. Otherwise, I ask you allow the minister to answer the question.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I'm sure the wine industry of Ontario considers this important as well. The Ontario red wines were up a significant 27%. Ontario wines, I understand, are the top-selling wines in the LCBOs. This growth is led by the premium-quality products. The LCBO sales of Ontario VQA wines have jumped by more than 46% in the last six months compared to the same time last year. We hope and expect Ontario wines will continue to enjoy their success both here and abroad.

Mr Froese: That's certainly good news for Ontario wine sales, grape growers in particular, and for tourism in the Niagara Peninsula, and I'm sure the member for Welland-Thorold appreciates that. The Ontario wine industry and grape growers are strong in exporting their product. Can you elaborate on how export products of Ontario wines are faring so far?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member is absolutely correct in saying the growing reputation and popularity of Ontario wines are bringing more and more visitors to the Niagara region in particular. This has shown a lot of initiative for a lot of the wineries in the area. They are now trying to bring more tourism in by creating inns on their property, on the estate properties, and also restaurants. It's great. Not only that, but the wine industry provides additional employment for the bottling industry and transportation industry.

Ontario wines are exporting more, over \$2 million, primarily to the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. Frankly, we, the government of Ontario, recognize and applaud the hard work and the dedication of the Ontario winemakers for their skilled achievements and competitive spirit. They're an example to all Canadians that they can compete in the world market and succeed.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning my office

spoke to Miss Pat Morris of Burlington. Miss Morris's mother, 93-year-old Mrs Catherine Duffy, received a bill of \$9,000 from Joe Brant hospital as the result of a stay as a result of a complication of pneumonia. Mrs Duffy was forced into Joe Brant as a result of a chronic shortage of nursing home beds in Halton. The choice had to be either a nursing home outside of the region, away from her daughter, or to be stuck with this \$9,000 bill.

Minister, can you tell us how, as a result of your cuts and the decisions that your ministry has made, Mrs Duffy is going to have to pay this \$9,000 bill that she's been handed by your ministry?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): My ministry didn't hand her the bill; the hospital did in accordance with the laws that were in place at the time the Liberal government was in office and at the time the NDP government was in office. I can't comment on the specifics of this case, obviously, but to say that people who are in chronic care beds past the time period provided by the law are offered placements in the community. If those placements are refused, they pay the co-payment as per the law of all three politically striped governments in this province.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate the minister's lack of response. Frankly, it was not a Liberal policy at that point, but that is not the issue.

The issue, Minister, is this. Let me explain to you. If you're not sure what has happened or why, let me tell you what the hospital president has told us is the reason this has happened. Let me quote Mr Don Scott, president and CEO of Joe Brant: "Until we get more beds, it's not going to happen." The hospital decided to divest itself of nursing home patients as a result of provincial government funding cuts last spring.

It has reduced the number of nursing home patients to 40, and it was at 60 a few months ago, so very clearly it is as a result of your cuts. I'm not saying this. The CEO of Joe Brant hospital is telling us that as a result of your cuts they had to reduce nursing home beds. As a result of that, this 93-year-old woman is now stuck with a \$9,000 bill.

Minister, can you commit today to reviewing the situation and look at waiving this bill? If the minister in charge of seniors maybe wants to stand up and answer it as one of his constituents, we'll ask the minister —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Hamilton East, come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Wilson: It's at the discretion of the hospital to waive the bill. It's their bill. If they want to waive it, it's up to the public members of that hospital board and I wouldn't stand in their way of waiving that bill.

I will say, though, on behalf of the government that we are looking at the bed situation. There are three projects under way in the Halton area. We are well aware, and I'm personally well aware, that out in that area of the province it's considered an underbedded area. There have to be more long-term-care beds. We're in the process of completing the overall plan that will be implemented later this year, and as part of future reinvestments we'll be looking at the number of beds.

I will say, though, that beds are available. They are being offered to patients, and patients are to avail themselves of those beds as they're offered.

1440

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Has he left for the day?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I don't know the whereabouts of the Minister of Environment and Energy. If you want to stand your question down, you can stand it down; otherwise, ask someone else. I can only assume that you knew you were going to ask the Minister of Environment and Energy before.

Here is the Minister of Environment and Energy.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): The wimp is back. Don't let him try to run out of the House.

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon, I ask that you withdraw that. That's totally unparliamentary.

Mr Pouliot: — government of wimps. Could I call one of them a Conservative? I'll withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Where are you getting this list?

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside, if you'd come to order too I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Ms Churley: Minister, my question is to you on the environment. Today there is great concern about the dangerous chemicals found when the abandoned Canada Malting Co laboratory on Lakeshore Boulevard in the east end caught fire. I understand that the property has changed hands several times and there may be difficulties in forcing the current owners to undertake and pay for a proper cleanup.

After all the damage your government has done to the environment through deregulation and laying off of staff, here's an opportunity for the minister to show some leadership. Will the minister commit today that he will get these chemicals off the site within 48 hours and follow up by making sure the property owner responsible for these toxic substances is made to pay for the cleanup?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): We are not deregulating; we are reregulating. We are making better regulations. We are putting together regulations which grew topsy-turvy over 30 years into a more logical and reasonable pattern. We've had consultations for over a year with regard to these. We've put out a green paper which people have had an opportunity to respond to. We are now going along on further consultations to deal with those regulations. Therefore we are going to have better regulations — not relaxed regulations but better regulations — to deal with in the future. We have always had a policy of "polluter pays," and we will continue to have that policy.

Ms Churley: The minister spent the whole time saying that he's improving environmental regulation in Ontario, which is totally ridiculous, but he still hasn't answered my question about an immediate problem near my riding and, may I add, in the riding of his colleague from St George-St David, and I'm sure his constituents may have concerns about this.

I want a commitment today that those chemicals will be taken off-site within 48 hours so people can feel safe and that the minister will go after the polluters. We want that commitment today, because in Riverdale already you let Canada Metal off the hook and the taxpayers are paying the full costs of the cleanup of lead in Riverdale. You've already set that precedent. I want a commitment today from you that those chemicals will be taken off the site within 48 hours by you.

Hon Mr Sterling: My intent, of course, is to look into this particular situation, but I want to say this to you. Why should we, the government, representing the taxpayers, pay for the removal of these particular chemicals when we can have these people pay for those particular matters? I presume these problems with these chemicals did not happen yesterday or last year or the year before. They've been there for some period of time. Therefore, I am pleased to promise the member that I will look into this particular situation to find a resolution of it, a resolution which has not been found over a long period of time.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): My question is for the Attorney General and it concerns the SIU, the special investigations unit, which has been on the mind of a number of people in Ottawa-Carleton recently for a couple of reasons. The first, of course, is a positive one, the appointment of Mr Marin from the prosecuting attorney's office, but also as a result of a couple of decisions that have come down from the SIU recently concerning police officers in the Ottawa-Carleton area, decisions which have taken a considerable period of time.

I'm asking the Attorney General today if he would advise us with regard to the backlog that gave rise to the delays in those decisions and whether that backlog continues.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'm pleased to report that the SIU no longer has a backlog of cases. As of September 1996, the total number of active cases in the unit was 28. From January 1996 to the end of September 1996, the SIU has taken on 117 new cases. Of these, only five are outside the 90-day goal set by the SIU as an administrative guide to complete a case. We're doing a lot better than we did in the days of the former government.

Mr Guzzo: My supplementary — and let me just say I'm not surprised to learn such facts when you tap into the market in Ottawa-Carleton for the type of help that you're using, sir. With regard now to the process, is the 90-day administrative deadline still in effect?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harnick: It's interesting to note by the reaction of the opposition that they obviously are not in favour of the SIU. But, Mr Speaker, I can tell you that both the public and the police deserve quick investigations and timely responses to incidents.

On October 24, 1996, the new director of the SIU, Mr Marin, announced a 30-day target project. All incoming investigations will be subject to a new 30-day turnaround. This will be achieved by streamlining the internal oper-

ations of the SIU, such as briefing and reporting processes. We have to recognize that there has to be some allowance for some issues pertaining to forensic testing, but Mr Marin assures us that the quality of investigations will not be compromised and that we will be doing the vast majority of them in 30 days.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): In the absence of the Premier, I'd like to go to the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance. As you know, Minister, it seems that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, or Mr Crombie, the phantom minister, is about to dissolve the six local city governments in Metro. I wonder whether there is any reference to that dissolution in the Common Sense Revolution. Where does it say that local governments are going to be abolished? Second, what do you think of the comments made by a Toronto columnist, Colin Vaughan, who says:

"Whatever happened to the Conservative opposition to big, faceless government? Not only is there the threat of amalgamation, but a parallel rumour suggests the province is about to be divided into just nine regional school boards.

"All more akin to a centralized Soviet form of government where bureaucratic convenience and control are paramount...." In other words, does this —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I hear that, the member for Oakwood. The question's been put.

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, member for Oakwood, the question's been put.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, I refer this question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for Oakwood for his question. He's certainly changed his position since he was on Metro council and since he was on York council, when he wanted to dissolve the municipalities.

The member asked whether this was in the Common Sense Revolution. It certainly was. We stated in that document that we wanted to get rid of waste and duplication and lower the cost of public administration to the taxpayer, and that's exactly what we intend to do.

Mr Colle: We all agree that there should be changes and there should be some adjustments, but this drastic eradication of local government for one centralized government with one bureaucracy controlled by Queen's Park — how can this serve the local taxpayer? Is this not just basically a tax grab, to take \$500 million out of Metro and spread it throughout the provincial treasury? Is this not just a smokescreen for a tax grab out of Metro?

Hon Mr Leach: Obviously there's absolutely no credibility to that question whatsoever. What we're looking at — and by the way, Mr Speaker, no decisions have been made as yet. There are a number of options on that table that we're looking at. We're going to review them all. The one that the member mentioned is only one of them.

By the way, if he wants to quote a columnist on the merits of this proposal, I suggest that he look at David Lewis Stein's column in the Toronto Star today.

1450

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item number 45.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is the motion carried? Agreed.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive petitions from workers outraged at this government's continuing attack on WCB and health and safety. Today I have further petitions from the United Food and Commercial Workers, Locals 175 and 63, forwarded to me by their president, Mike Fraser; their secretary-treasurer, Wayne Hanley; and their benefits coordinator, Herb MacDonald. The petition reads as follows:

"To save workers' compensation:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury;

privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We therefore demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeal structure with worker representation, that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

On behalf of my caucus, I add my name to theirs.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition sent to me by a group of students in my constituency of Nepean. It reads as follows:

"At St Elizabeth Ann Seton, Mrs Pentney's grade 4 class really would like a high school in Barrhaven. We are students who will be affected soon, so we are asking for your help now."

It's signed by Kyle Windle, Jeremy Walsh and a group of grade 4 students in my constituency, and I agree.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas motorists are not obeying the highway traffic law regarding stopping for school buses which are loading and unloading school children on the streets and highways of Ontario; and

"Whereas the children who ride the school buses of Ontario are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved, that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 78, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act, which will be presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Essex-Kent, as ballot item number 51 in the next legislative session, be passed at third reading.

"Bill 78 imposes liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and increases the fines for drivers identified breaking the school bus law to a range from \$500 to \$1,000 on first conviction and \$1,000 to \$2,000 on a subsequent conviction. It establishes a fine for identified vehicles breaking the school bus law of \$1,000 to \$2,000 on first conviction, and \$2,000 to \$3,000 on a subsequent conviction.

"The petitioners ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I affix my name to this.

USER FEES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet other petitions that were signed by the citizens of the commun-

ity of Timmins when Mr Harris came visiting our fine community. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government had an election promise not to impose user fees; and

"Whereas the Harris government has imposed user fees in the name of copayments for medication; and

"Whereas we believe these user fees are to assist the government in funding its tax cut for the rich; and

"Whereas many seniors and disabled people cannot afford this user fee, resulting in non-compliance with prescriptions and the possibility of more serious illness as a result of non-compliance;

"We therefore demand that the Premier stop this attack on the elderly and the disabled by cancelling the copayment user fee charge to seniors."

I've affixed my signature to that petition.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I've yet another petition concerning driver exams for seniors in Port Colborne signed by people like Betsy Davis and Jean Winters. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the city of Welland is slated to close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Port Colborne and Wainfleet senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences for seniors,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Port Colborne and Wainfleet and that recognizes that when tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest places to assess driver ability."

I affix my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have another 2,626 signatures regarding the restructuring commission's report on Sudbury.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by approximately 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two of Sudbury's hospitals."

I affix my name to the petition as I agree with the 10,304 people who have signed this petition.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by many of the tenants at the apartment building at 179 George Street in Hamilton. It is headed "Petition Against Changes to Tenants' Rights."

"We, the tenants of rental apartment units, completely disagree with any proposed changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act, the Rent Control Act, the Residents' Rights Act, the Rental Housing Protection Act, the land lease act and the vital services act, and the introduction of any new legislation where tenants' rights could be denied or reduced and leave us open to potential landlord harassment or discrimination."

Since I'm in support of this position, I add my signature to theirs.

1500

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed C-68, An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control, and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearm smuggling and trafficking, and a ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic of illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I have signed this petition.

MANDATORY INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The following petition is to the Honourable Solicitor General and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman and the Legislative Assembly, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

I affix my name to the petition as I am in full agreement with it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here yet another petition from the people of Cochrane South expressing their concerns about the Mike Harris government. It goes on as follows:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has already cut substantial dollars and staff from the Ministry of Environment; and

"Whereas the cuts have already placed a burden on remaining staff, making it difficult, if not impossible, for them to do their jobs adequately and protect the safety of citizens of the province; and

"Whereas the likelihood of further cuts will leave us wondering if we are breathing clean air and drinking clean water; and

"Whereas the auditor's report confirms our fears;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario restore funding to this much-needed ministry to maintain safe levels of air and water."

It's signed by some 400 people in the community of Cochrane South.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have another petition concerning drivers' exams for seniors, this one from some seniors in Fort Erie, Ontario. I'll be visiting a group tomorrow so I'm pleased to present the petition in the House today. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the town of Fort Erie has been closed as of September 24 and the centre in Niagara Falls will close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Fort Erie senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences to seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Fort Erie and that recognizes that when

tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest place to assess driver ability."

Since I'm in agreement with the petition, I will sign my name to it.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the Essex county area.

"Whereas motorists are not obeying the highway traffic law regarding stopping for school buses which are loading and unloading school children on the streets and highways of Ontario; and

"Whereas the children who ride the school buses of Ontario are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 78, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act, which will be presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Essex-Kent, as ballot item number 51 in the next legislative session, be passed at third reading.

"Bill 78 imposes liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and increases the fines for drivers identified breaking the school bus law to a range from \$500 to \$1,000 on first conviction and \$1,000 to \$2,000 on a subsequent conviction. It establishes a fine for identified vehicles breaking the school bus law of \$1,000 to \$2,000 on first conviction and \$2,000 to \$3,000 on a subsequent conviction.

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I will sign my name to this.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition organized by Rita Gasslein on Erie Avenue in my riding of Hamilton Centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the clinics and the centre have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre in the province of Ontario;

"Further, we, the undersigned, request that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and

that the professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my name to theirs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Carroll from the standing committee on general government presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 52, An Act to promote resource development, conservation and environmental protection through the streamlining of regulatory processes and the enhancement of compliance measures in the aggregate and petroleum industries / Projet de loi 52, Loi visant à promouvoir la mise en valeur des ressources, la conservation ainsi que la protection de l'environnement en simplifiant les processus de réglementation et en renforçant les mesures de conformité dans l'industrie pétrolière et l'industrie des agrégats.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 52 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALCOHOL, GAMING AND CHARITY FUNDING PUBLIC INTEREST ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 RÉGISSANT LES ALCOOLS, LES JEUX ET LE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE DANS L'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to alcohol and gaming / Projet de loi 75, Loi réglementant les alcools et les jeux dans l'intérêt public, prévoyant le financement des organismes de bienfaisance grâce à la gestion responsable des loteries vidéo et modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait aux alcools et aux jeux.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): First of all, let me speak to the title of the bill. Oh, please. This has happened so often during the course of the last year and months. There's this weird, Orwellian kind of Newspeak, where there's a distortion — and it goes beyond distortion — to the point of dishonesty. To talk about this being designed to fund charities and to talk about it as an act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest is not just naïve but outright dishonest.

It obscures the reality of what this bill is going to do to what used to be our Ontario. It's no longer ours. Ontario has been hijacked, it's under siege, it's being

held to ransom by Harris and his gang and their rich Bay Street buddies. Let's make it clear: This bill is all about introducing hi-tech, very sophisticated slot machines, one-armed bandits, to every bar, every restaurant, every tavern in every corner of every neighbourhood of every community in this province.

I know the minister and the minister before him have been briefed and all pumped up with the little briefing notes and the clips and the sort of things they are supposed to say, or at least told to say, and I'm not sure they believe half of them, in response to the criticisms.

One of the things they like to point out is that there are fewer slots going to be here in Ontario per capita than any other province. Well, look, let's talk about Ontario. The fact is 20,000 slots. You want to know how many are going to be in your town, in your community? The calculation's not difficult at all; it's a ratio of one for every 550 population. That's what 20,000 slots here in Ontario amounts to.

Take the population of your community, divide it by 550, that's how many one-armed bandits are going to be proliferating throughout the city you live in. That means — let me tell you, I did the simple calculation for the folks in the city of Welland. With a population of 48,000, we're talking about 87 slot machines: 87 slots in the city of Welland alone on the basis of the proposal by this government.

So this isn't an act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest. "Public interest" — please, give me a break. When have slot machines ever been in the public interest? Does the mob that runs them in any number of jurisdictions have the public interest at heart? Never have, never will. "To fund charities" — give me a break. The slots are going to make it impossible for volunteer organizations in the communities where I come from, Welland and Thorold, and in similar communities. I'm insistent that Welland and Thorold are as representative of the real Ontario as any community is in this province.

1510

Here we've got slot machines that are going to take away the opportunity for organizations like the ones that make my community a far better place to live in, and it becomes all that much more important when you see this government with its attack on supporting these types of agencies. Are Big Brothers and Big Sisters down in Welland-Thorold going to be impacted? You bet your boots. Yes, they're going to be badly hurt. Any number of organizations now that — I understand the bingo phenomenon. Welland, some 20 miles from the Buffalo border, with its, and I'm proud, fair share of Catholic churches has been a bingo haven for a long time. I'm telling you 20,000 slots, 20,000 one-armed bandits are a far cry from the bingo games seniors are playing over in Slovak Hall on Hagar Street, where it's small stakes and you win small prizes and it is truly a social activity two or three hours in the afternoon when people get together.

A whole lot of charitable organizations and societies like Slovak Hall and the Casa Dante and the Hungarian Hall are going to be badly hurt. This isn't about funding those charities; it's about taking away from them the opportunity they've had through their hard work, through volunteer participation, to raise modest funds, sustain

their own activities, all very important to the community, as often as not participation in other fund-raising events where they give of their money.

Before we get into the whole issue of slots, the one-armed bandits this government wants to see proliferating throughout every town in this province, please let me speak for just a minute about one aspect of this legislation that is certainly as insidious but has been so rarely spoken of during the course of the debate about Bill 75: the abolition of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario, because that's what this bill does.

It abolishes the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario without there having been any meaningful consultation, notwithstanding the rather pathetic claims of the previous minister and, as far as I'm aware, the silence of the present minister, without any meaningful consultation with the Ontario Liquor Board Employees' Union, those hard-working people who work for the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario now, including the liquor inspectors who have served this province well, I tell you, for a long time with some pretty scarce resources. That's what Bill 75 is all about, the abolition of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario and the abolition of the Gaming Control Commission.

What do we find in their stead? By God, an arm's-length, non-profit corporation that incorporates or purports to incorporate the two regulatory bodies, the so-called Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, which will have no direct responsibility or accountability to any minister, as if any ministers of Mike Harris were accountable or responsible — but one can hope — and a scheme that's designed to lead ultimately towards the privatization of the regulation of, among other things, first the sale, distribution and marketing of alcohol. My God, the immorality — think about it — of abandoning, abdicating one's responsibility, as this government is doing, the regulation of the sale, distribution and advertising of alcohol, a highly addictive substance which continues to wreak havoc on individuals, families and communities across this province, a drug which carries with it a huge social and personal cost. This government is prepared to surrender its regulation and control to what at the end of the day are going to be private interests. It's the height of immorality and it betrays the real agenda of this government, which is to sell off everything that working people and their families have built and paid for in this province to private interests so you can maximize profits at the expense of people's lives.

The same is true in terms of the regulation of gaming itself, because the Gaming Control Commission, part of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, is now wiped off the map and is part and parcel of this arm's-length Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, a non-profit corporation with no direct accountability to any government. Indeed, amendments that were raised during the course of committee hearings — and I hope I've got enough time to speak about those committee hearings, because they warrant being spoken about here in this chamber; a pathetic mockery of the committee process, as repressive and oppressive and undemocratic an exercise as has ever been engaged in here at Queen's Park, and one that doesn't bode well for the future.

Notwithstanding a whole lot of concerns raised about — catch this one. All of the directors of this non-profit corporation are going to be appointed by the government with no guidelines, no criteria for their appointment to ensure there's some balance on this board of directors. Who's going to end up there? We know. We've looked at the people who have been appointed by this government over the course of the last year and a few months. We're talking about the most ideological political hacks who could ever be —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Hirelings.

Mr Kormos: Someone said "hirelings"; I say quislings — appointed by this government to boards that have great responsibility but which have ultimately one goal, and that is to maximize profits for the private sector interests, the big corporate interests that are inevitably going to be involved. I'll talk about the mob later because we can't discuss this without talking about the inevitable involvement of the mob either — organized crime.

We can't talk about this without talking about the invitation that Bill 75 is, a blank cheque for organized crime to walk into this province and involve itself in an activity that's not just been endorsed but is being sponsored by this government and that victimizes. It doesn't provide a service. Come on. I'm not talking about providing a service, though some have tried to characterize this as entertainment. That's like the heroin dealer trying to characterize the use of heroin by his or her clientele as mere entertainment.

Slot machines are certainly the crack cocaine of gambling, the most addictive form of gambling and one that has as its target market youngsters, young people, our children, Speaker, your children, and the children of the folks I know so well down in Welland-Thorold. Again, they're so alike, other hardworking folks, people who have hopes and aspirations for their children across this province.

The video slot machine industry hasn't been sitting idle over the course of the last 10, 15, 20 years. They certainly didn't sit idle when this government came into power because they saw an entry point. Gangs like that led by Marshall Pollock were at this government's doorstep quick as a boo, saying, "By God, here's our entry point."

I know the last government introduced casino gambling in specific venues. I recall the debate. I recall my concerns that I expressed, yes, about casino gambling. I recall how they were shared by Mike Harris, now the Premier, and Ernie Eves, now the Minister of Finance. I recall how Ernie Eves spoke out against slot machines, reminding this House and the public about the inherent dangers that accompany slot machines when they're imposed on a community. We're talking about something far greater here than a casino in Windsor, Niagara Falls or Orillia. We're talking about a proliferation of slot machines, the crack cocaine of gambling, slot machines that are far more sophisticated than any person in this province has ever seen before and slot machines that have as their target market our children, and not without design and not without intent.

Gangs led by the likes of Marshall Pollock have been eager to impose themselves on — not impose themselves; they're merely getting the payback, the grease. They're

collecting their debts. They're collecting the vigourish from this government. They're saying: "It's our turn. We helped you guys get elected." They did. "Now it's time to pay up, Mike Harris and gang. Some of our members may not be the most savoury types, some of our interests may certainly not be in the public interest, but it's time to pay up. Let us get our slot machines out there in small-town Ontario so we can pick the pocket" —

1520

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold questioned the integrity of some of the members when he said some of our members may be less than savoury.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. So here we are. We've got gangs approaching this government saying: "It's our turn. We've waited too long. The New Democrats wouldn't let us put these slot machines in neighbourhoods of small-town Ontario, but we can count on you, Mike, because you're indebted to us. It's time for you to pay back corporate Ontario for having gotten you elected." By God, the payback's going to be one that comes out of the pockets of each and every member of each and every community in this province.

During the committee hearings, as we travelled about — and I know that there were advocates of slots, of course there were, the people who make the things. With 20,000 slots, we're talking about a whole lot of profit to be made on the manufacture of them. We're talking about the spin doctors who accompany these. Do you know who got hoodwinked? Do you know who's been had here? Do you know who got the shaft? The Tory caucus did. I appreciate this may be uncomfortable to some of the people from the Tory caucus who spoke to me about it, but when this matter was presented to the Tory caucus, among other things, they were called video lottery terminals.

What a benign name, the image of somehow somebody sitting down and playing Pac-Man for a quarter a shot. We're not talking about Pac-Man machines here. We're not talking about pinball any more. The stakes have gone up considerably. We're talking about the crack cocaine of gambling, the most addictive form of gambling ever created and one that has as its target market the youngsters, children, youth, adolescents and young adults of this province. Tory backbenchers got hoodwinked, because the spin doctors came in with the flip-charts and the overhead projectors, the whole nine yards, telling this caucus about what an easy sell this was going to be.

One has to consider the government's motive here. Why does the government want this cash grab? Why would this government even consider it? From the data from other provinces, other jurisdictions that have been so foolish and naïve and corrupt as to permit slots in their jurisdictions, we know who the players are. They're not the high stakes gamblers. They're not the jokers who were over at Woodbine for the Breeders' Cup at the \$1,000 window. They're little people who play a nickel, a quarter, a loonie at a time. They are. They're the unsophisticated gamblers, because the slots are an easy game. You don't have to know any rules. You don't have

to handicap a racing form. You don't have to handicap a race. You don't have to worry about the rules of the game of blackjack or poker. You just empty your pocket and keep pumping them in. Let me tell you, these machines are designed, and going to be increasingly so, to take a loonie every second and a half, with bells and whistles you've never dreamed of.

We're talking here about stuff that's akin to virtual reality; we heard that during the course of committee hearings. We're talking about stuff here that's going to turn you on and get you going and get that wrist just a-pumping and get those loonies flowing to the point where it empties your pockets far faster than any other game of chance ever could.

You walk away at the end of the day pulling out your pockets like rabbit ears, saying: "By God, what happened? What happened to the paycheque? What happened to the baby bonus cheque? What happened to the mother's allowance cheque? What happened to the money I was supposed to take to the landlord? What happened to the food money that I was walking over to the IGA, the Dominion store or the Commissos down in Welland or the Friendly Food Mart?" You walk away saying, "I don't know what's just been done to me. I've been razzle-dazzled; I've been taken; I've been hoodwinked; I've been held up by the ankles and had every last nickel and dime shaken out of me," by these guys, by this government, with the collaborators in the slot machine industry who have no conscience.

This government knows it needs the money. It's talking about millions, I tell you, billions of dollars being sucked out of the pockets, out of the paycheques, out of the bank accounts of hardworking folks — and some who wish they could be working; more than a few — in this province, who deserve far better treatment from a government in these hard and desperate and tough times.

We're talking about people here who are going to be victimized by the government; not the wealthy, make no mistake about it. Conrad Black and Babs Amiel, it's not them that these machines are designed for. Connie Black and Babs, why, they've got their own places of recreation. I don't know if they were over at the Breeders' Cup or not, over at that \$500 window. I don't know if there is a \$1,000 window. This isn't who these slot machines are designed for.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Fort York, if you want to speak to the member for Lake Nipigon, do so in a quiet way.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your intervening on my behalf, because this is important stuff. I know there are some folks here who aren't particularly interested. By God, David Tsubouchi wasn't. We asked him to come to the committee hearings. He was a no-show. We said: "Please, you're the new minister. Perhaps you could tell us what in your sense of morality, of fairness, permits you to endorse this type of scheme. Perhaps you could respond to the plethora of research that's available from this province, from the United States, from Quebec, from the western provinces, from Great Britain."

The government members didn't want to hear about it, didn't want to read — they didn't, Speaker — the remarkable evidence that contrasts with what I understand has been a consistent level of gambling addiction in the general population of somewhere between 2% and 4%, although even I say that's serious enough to warrant this government paying some heed; the research that shows levels of gambling addiction in multiples of two and three times that among adolescents, especially with respect to electronic slot machines.

Mr Marchese: But they say it's a choice, Peter. That's what they say.

Mr Kormos: This government says, "Nobody forces you to put that loonie or that toonie into that machine." That's what the cigarette industry, those bastards of death, have to say. That's what they've got to say about cigarettes.

The Deputy Speaker: The language is left to be desired. It's the type of language which I don't like to hear in the House. I find it insulting. I would ask you to withdraw that remark.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw, but I tell you, it's hard to be kind to a tobacco industry that has preyed upon generations and generations of people, slaughtering hundreds of thousands and millions on this continent with the height of dishonesty, with the height of disdain, with the height of corruption, and who now, when there are enhanced levels of awareness of the intense addictiveness of tobacco, moves on to Third World countries to market their evil, deadly product there. "Bastards" may not have been appropriate, Speaker, and I acknowledge that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, please withdraw that remark again, and don't use it again.

1530

Mr Kormos: I withdraw it. It's the B word. I don't know how kindly the Speaker wants me to treat the tobacco industry, but I tell you this: I view them no more kindly than I view the slot machine industry, because they're similar industries that have the intent to prey, with a highly addictive phenomenon, on the most vulnerable people in our community, and this government is prepared to join arms with them. This government is prepared to write a blank cheque to the mob, to open the doors. It knows.

Police reports, which this government denied and then ignored, refused — this government was Gethsemanic about police reports that were available in this province and elsewhere in the country — indicate that, one, Mike Harris's legal electronic slots are not going to eliminate the illegal ones. We know that; the police know that. This government wants to argue that the slot machines are all about eliminating the illegals. Hogwash. BS, as they say down in Welland.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold is too intelligent a man and will understand the procedures after all the years that he's spent here. I would ask you to refrain from using that type of language.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw. Down in Welland-Thorold they call it BF, bull feathers.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, let me not repeat it again.

Mr Kormos: They don't think highly of that down in Welland-Thorold. Let me tell you, the language that they're inclined to use to describe it is far more graphic than what the Speaker's letting me use now. Even "feathers." Feathers, Speaker; feathers of a bull. That's what they'd be inclined to say to those arguments, in far more graphic language than you're permitting me to use now.

It's hard to remain conservatively calm about this when we know this is being inflicted upon our communities and eventually our children. Why? Because this government promised a tax break to the richest people in this province, a tax break for the rich. And this government has every intention of fulfilling that promise, just like it has every intention of taking care of its rich corporate buddies, be they the slot machine industry, notwithstanding that the slot machine industry is inevitably infiltrated and corrupted in one way or another by organized crime and the mob, be it them or be it simply their rich friends, the Mercedes-Benz crowd, the Jaguar crowd. You know the kind, you know the ilk, with their six- and seven-digit incomes and for whom a 30% tax break is going to mean big money in the bank.

The 30% tax break — you know what the folks, the hardworking people in Welland-Thorold, say about the tax break? You know what they say to Mike Harris about his tax break? Why, they tell him, "Mike Harris, you can put that tax break where the moon don't shine." Because at the end of the day, if you're going to put children out of their classrooms and sick people out of hospitals, and if you're going to have to introduce slot machines into our community and bring the spectre of organized crime into law-abiding, peaceful communities, we don't want it.

The stakes are much higher for the very rich. First of all, there's no conscience there. There's no conscience. Big corporations have never been moral. They've been quite accustomed and quite attuned to victimizing anything that the law permits them, and on occasion, from time to time, things that the law doesn't permit them. Tell me about the morality of the tobacco industry. Demonstrate to me one iota of morality in the tobacco industry. I tell you this: You'll find no more morality among the slot machine industry. There's no money-back guarantees. There's no assistance for the destitute and the devastated who have had every last nickel and dime sucked out of them. There's no quick fix for communities which have been corrupted by the crime that inevitably accompanies the introduction of slot machines.

The horse racing industry has been using it as an argument, as well as the prospect of employment, but what we learned is that the labour component of slots is minimal. That's why they're so darned — may I, "darned"? — profitable, because the labour component is minimal.

The province of Quebec, with its thousands and thousands of slot machines, ended up hiring a couple of hundred people at the end of the day across the whole province. It didn't create employment. It emptied a whole lot of people's pockets, though.

The horse racing industry said, "By God, we need slots," and they held as hostage horse breeders and the agricultural component of the horse racing industry. Let me tell you something, Speaker, and I know I haven't got a whole lot of time left. I dearly regret having breached the parliamentary rules because I know that forced you to your feet in your successful efforts to correct me. The horse racing industry has talked about slots being essential to the survival of this industry. We learned from Windsor Raceway management that they've got slot machines ready that will show you a tote board. You sit at your slot machine and it's picture in picture, just like on your RCA Victor television set at home, where you can watch the legislative channel in the lower right-hand corner and Laverne and Shirley on the main screen, as you do from time to time while you're waiting to see whether there's a call for the new Speaker. You can bet on your horse, switch from picture to picture, watch your horse run down in the lower right-hand corner and then play the slots, one every second and a half while that horse is running, then you switch it over and bet your horse again.

I'll tell you something I've talked to a lot of people about, including computer people. I predict that this slot machine industry and the virtual reality component of it will kill horse racing in this province because within our lifetimes there will be simulated horse racing. The Ontario Jockey Club has no interest in maintaining its range of tracks across the province. With this type of machinery they will be able to create lineages, horses, histories, jockeys, races and racetracks, which exist only in computer programmers' imaginations, that will generate as much, if not more, betting activity than the remaining racetracks in this province do now.

I warn the people in the agricultural industry and aficionados of horse breeding and horse racing that this slot machine proposal has nothing to do with saving the horse race industry; it has everything to do with eliminating the horse race industry and replacing it with a far more profitable component of gambling.

Needless to say I'm not going to be supporting this bill. It's an evil, insidious bill. It reflects evil intention on the part of the government that presents it to this House. The committee process lacked democracy in any sense of the word and showed nothing but disdain for presenters who dared to contradict government members who themselves were prepared with only the most meagre of propaganda and spin from a pathetic Premier's office.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

1540

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I had the pleasure of participating in the committee hearings on Bill 75. I spent a lot of time with the member for Welland-Thorold and continue to disagree on some areas of the bill. It could reflect the different views of our constituents. People in Welland-Thorold may differ from those of Niagara South. But in terms of the benefits to charities of Bill 75 and in terms of the benefits in job creation of Bill 75, I feel strongly that those people in Niagara South are behind the bill for these benefits.

For example, the benefits to charities from the permanent charity event sites, the VLTs at racetracks and VLTs

in general, is up to \$180 million more. That's money I hope will go to good community groups like Wainfleet minor hockey that I've talked about or the Port Colborne Optimists or the Head Injury Association of Fort Erie, good groups that stand to benefit from a permanent charity event site, instead of these roving casinos where part of the gamble is trying to figure out where the game is going to be on a particular night. Put them in a permanent place so that the money will be flowed to the charities and benefit associations like that.

The member for Welland-Thorold mentioned Big Sisters. I remember Eileen Moore of the Big Sisters of Peel region was very much in favour of firming up permanent charity event sites because they find it very difficult to gauge how things are going to be from one month to the next. They can't advertise effectively and the players don't know where they're going to be, so they lose a great opportunity. So let's go with Bill 75. Let's go with permanent event sites.

Certainly in the hearings in Fort Erie we heard very strongly from places like Joe's Place, which has blues music in the Niagara Peninsula, Sherkston Shores, the Dog House in Fort Erie. They all talk about the benefits of job creation from Bill 75.

Finally, on behalf of those 4,500 people from my riding, from Welland-Thorold, from throughout the Niagara Peninsula who work at the Fort Erie Race Track or are associated with it, they are strongly behind this bill because they've seen this kind of mixture, the VLTs at the racetrack, work in any number of jurisdictions: Delaware, Rhode Island, Manitoba, California. It's a proven benefit to charities, to the racing industry and a long-term job creator.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's my privilege to reply to the comments made by the member for Welland-Thorold. I think throughout the hearings too, as was referred to, we heard from various areas of interest, including the racetracks. We've commented on those many times, that they are controlled environments. They're environments in which it is understandable that the introduction of video lottery terminals may help the industry and at the same time may be well controlled within that industry.

The concern we've shown time and time again, along with those who have presented, is in the area of addiction and also that organized crime will be given the opportunity to infiltrate these machines. I ask the government if it will just consider this: that there is out there a reasonable amount of doubt surrounding the introduction of these machines, ie, in the area of their addictiveness and how these insidious little machines on occasion can just take your life away.

I just ask the government to consider: Where there's doubt, don't. If there are areas of this bill, like the proliferation of them across the province in every licensed establishment and bar, look at that very carefully, and if you have some doubt — and I think there are members across who do, because I've talked to members of the government who have expressed some concern — don't just look at the bucks. If there's some doubt, let's not. Let's put them only where they can be well controlled.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): One more time the House has had the privilege to listen to the member for Welland-Thorold in his unique and compassionate fashion issue a warning, an ultimatum to the government, telling them that they have become insatiable, that they're going too far. Oh, sure, they will start slowly, with the proliferation of 6,000 of those unarmed bandits, and then you watch them go quickly, step by step, to 20,000. Consequently you'll find one in every bar, one in every restaurant and, if they had their way, one in every school.

What is being done here with this proliferation is sapping the opportunity of charity casinos. We're not talking about, at night and evenings, an establishment where we could play a little baccarat. We're talking about the extreme, about the addiction, about the vile display of what is the crack cocaine of gambling — nothing short of that. This is the worst kind of demon. It borders on the obscene and on the porcine. There's not one ounce of human dimension attached to it as long as the money keeps rolling in.

People of the cloth, churches, community organizations: We don't listen to them because they stand in the way. See, Speaker, they take time. There will be no consultation. Municipalities are saying, "We don't want your junk inside our boundaries." But they're saying, "We're going to force it down your throat because we wish to have the money."

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I think for the member for Lac-Nipigon to suggest that somehow it's a provincial government priority, to suggest that there is any public policy motivation to put some sort of gambling activity in schools is absolutely obscene and he knows it. He knows that's not the case.

I indicate to the member for Welland-Thorold — he was the only one opposite who was prepared to stand up and speak his mind when they voted on the social contract, voted to override collective agreements. He's the only one opposite who would vote against it. So I was interested to know what he —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I wish it was only Peter.

Mr Baird: Well, I read Hansard and he was the only one. All the rest of you voted for it, voted to override collective agreements. So I wondered what the member for Welland-Thorold thought then. He thought casinos were an opportunity in gambling. Any downside to gambling was only a perception. In fact, the member for Riverdale, in Hansard, July 12, 1993, said VLTs would be allowed within the confines of the casino. VLTs obviously weren't that bad when the previous government was in power because that's what it says in Hansard.

What did they say in Welland-Thorold? I have a quote here from the Windsor Star, dated November 11, 1994:

"'Ontario should take its casino winnings and bet them on the red, the debt, that is,' MPP Peter Kormos says. The maverick New Democratic MPP for Welland-Thorold said that the NDP government is raking in the dough from the Windsor casino and thinking about building more. 'It should seriously consider paying down the almost \$90-billion provincial debt with its newfound

cash” — the member for Welland-Thorold — “‘It’s a missed opportunity,’ he said. Kormos said it would be a good marketing tool for the government to put its casino windfall down towards the provincial debt. ‘If Ontarians had a sense that casino profits would be dedicated to its debt, it would be far easier to sell and would go a long way to offset the perceived down side of casinos.’”

When we know his Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations was saying at the same time VLTs would be allowed, that’s what he was saying about what the proceeds should go to.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, you have two minutes.

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I’ve got to thank you. The member for Nepean has walked right in. I feel like the spider to the fly. The member for Nepean speaks where he should exercise caution. I wish he had the courage that some people do from time to time in every government to vote against those things that they think are wrong.

I voted against the casino legislation in the course of the last government and then remained critical of the manner in which the government was reaping profits without dedicating them to a particular goal. I’m proud of the position I took on casinos. I was in a minority. I lost the debate. I understand that. The fact is that his colleagues were agreeing with me, his leader and his Treasurer.

I accept having been on the losing side of the debate over casinos. My concern about casinos remains. But my concern about a proliferation of slot machines controlled by the mob in partnership with Bugsy Harris, the Premier — I withdraw, Speaker. But I know that the Premier has seen that movie more than a few times. He couldn’t be embarking on this sort of folly without having seen the movie or at least read the biography of Bugsy Siegel thoroughly. Those that some will emulate — it beats me.

We’re talking here about something that goes — yes, notwithstanding my concern about casinos and my willingness to vote against them, even though it meant voting against my government, the proliferation of 20,000 slots in this province goes far beyond what Windsor and Niagara Falls and Casino Rama constitute. If there are problems in the casino, they are compounded a thousand times by the evil being done by the slots that your government proposes.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I’m pleased to rise on this bill today, primarily in response to the comments of my friend the member for St Catharines, when he suggested that members who had differences of opinion should have an opportunity from the back benches to address the issue. I am one who has some differences with this bill, one major one, and it’s simply this. This bill does not go far enough. This bill does not go far enough to do what really needs to be done in this area.

No one knows that better than two members of the justice committee who served their governments as Attorney General and Solicitor General in the past. I don’t necessarily think people should accept my solution to the problem. I’ve learned around here that my opinion on most things is somewhat irrelevant, but at least in identifying the problem I certainly feel strongly that the

former Attorney General and the former Solicitor General on that justice committee would share that opinion.

Twenty-five years have gone by since the last thorough investigation of gambling in Canada took place and at that time it was suggested, and I think accepted, that about 95% of all the gambling in Canada at that time was illegal. The best estimates today would suggest that we’ve progressed. We’ve probably reduced that to about 75% or 80%; 75% or 80% of all the gambling being of the illegal variety.

Let me also set the record straight. If there is a crack cocaine of gambling, it is certainly not video lottery terminals and it’s probably not even slot machines; it has to be the illegal bookmaking that goes on in our communities, every place the justice committee travelled, every newspaper, whether it’s Thunder Bay, Kenora, certainly here in Toronto, carrying the lines in advertising, the betting possibilities, for the illegal bookmaking.

1550

In Ottawa, where I come from, we’ve had one case in the last few years that I have been able to highlight: a charge of bookmaking which took place in 1993. The wiretap was in effect from 11 am to 12:55 pm on a Sunday — admittedly a busy Sunday when the World Series was on, NFL football, CFL football. That little individual in this business had accepted \$330,000 in bets in less than two hours. That particular afternoon at Rideau Carleton Raceway in our community, where the racetrack held an event of 11 races, the total handle exceeded \$126,000. The interesting point in that particular case was that the wiretap had not been authorized for the purposes of gambling.

Here in Toronto and southern Ontario, I’ve been able to encounter four examples of that of which I speak. In September 1992, the Toronto Star reported that four men were charged with a \$5-million business. In December 1992, a three-month investigation revealed a net profit of \$750,000 in the issue of an illegal bookmaking operation in the northern part of Metro. In October 1993, a \$100-million operation was broken; \$6 million in assets seized. In July 1994, a \$50-million-a-year operation operated from car cell phones.

In that particular case, a major fine of \$50,000 was handed out to the most senior person, and that should tell you something. I also have been told by an individual involved in the crown’s office — he did not prosecute the case — that a very interesting question was asked by the lawyer that day. He asked for time to pay the fine and when the judge said, “How long do you need?” the lawyer said, “We’ll need two weeks.”

As a former judge, I can tell you, you learn a lot from those questions. I remember holding court in Niagara, where I first encountered the member for Welland-Thorold. Let me tell you, I learned a tremendous respect for the member for Welland-Thorold as a practising attorney. That respect evaporates daily, not so much in the House, I must say, but certainly in the committee when he makes a mockery of the committee structure and how it operated on this particular bill. He has to take 95% of the responsibility for it.

But I remember sentencing a young lady who had been charged with prostitution and pleaded guilty. You're in a strange town, you're in a strange community, and I had to sentence her at that time. I imposed a fine of \$500. I said to the young lady who was defending her, the defence attorney, "Does your client need time to pay?" The gal herself quickly looked up and said, "Could I get five nights?" When you get the situation of two weeks to raise \$50,000, you know what you're dealing with.

In the bookmaking operations in these communities which we represent, many of the big operators never get charged; it's always the little one. They're very successful and they're successful for a number of reasons, but number one, they give people what they want. They'll let you bet the Tiger Cats and the Argos on Labour Day or the Monday Night Football game tonight. You don't have to bet a three-team or a four-team parlay, as Pro Line forces you to do. If you do, you get double the odds of Pro Line.

The other thing the bookmakers do that makes them closer to the crack cocaine of gambling, the amount of business they do, is one of the things that gives rise to some of the tragic situations and why the money that we are allotting for addiction — and indeed, the former government, which took that first step the time they put the first slot machines, the only slot machines, the only one-armed bandits, yes, in the restricted area of the Windsor casino. Bookmakers give credit. That is how many of the people, many of the families I have seen in the court system devastated by this addiction as well as other addictions come into the situation which creates the havoc in their lives.

But you know, we're here dealing first of all with VLTs, not slot machines. There's a big difference. Now, the opposition in the committee hearings has tried to meld the two. If that serves their purpose, then who am I to argue? But let me explain something. It's a very, very dangerous gesture because there will be an argument made for slot machines in the charity casino halls, the permanent casino halls, and maybe even at the restaurant.

Studies that have been quoted ad nauseam have all been studies done on the slot machine. The VLT is somewhat different. I don't say it doesn't have problems.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's worse.

Mr Guzzo: The member for St Catharines, with his free advice again, worth exactly what we pay for it in this House, knows differently.

In this bill, what are we doing? Yes, we're attempting to support a racing industry that provides a tremendous amount of employment. Racetracks in every area of this province came forward. It's not the 700 jobs at Windsor, the 400 jobs at the Sudbury track or, in my own area, 650 at Rideau Carleton, 90% of which are part-time, and there's nothing wrong and I'm not suggesting that.

But the member for London North, in one of her two-minute comments the other day, really drilled home the issue, and I was pleased to hear her recognize it, when she talked about the jobs in the rural area, the jobs at the training centres and in the facilities that provide services for the industry. She said, and I think I am quoting her accurately, "These are the people who are not easily relocatable." Certainly the part-time employees, the

students and even the 10% who are full-time at the track and in the industry, these are well trained and capable people who can move to another job in the city if need be. But in the rural areas where we have people dealing with the type of jobs that give care to the animals and assist in the training, they have no other prospects. That's the type of industry we're trying to protect by taking the unprecedented step that we took with this bill in assisting the racing industry.

Of course I guess it's apropos to say that it might be worthwhile to then allow the racing industry to put on the kind of world-class show that was put on in this city at Woodbine Racetrack this last weekend, a show that will enhance the tourist industry of this entire area as a result of that American broadcast, the US broadcast which was simulcast across the United States, Europe and the Orient.

The second thing this bill is designed to do is to support the charity gaming halls, the permanent gaming halls. If ever we heard anything of substance in the committee hearings, we heard time and time again how certain of the charities were not getting their fair share in some areas — not all areas, but in some of the areas. The hearings demonstrated that. Also, in fairness, the hearings demonstrated that there were other problems and concerns that will have to be met when the implementation takes place and the travelling road shows are ended and we've moved to a permanent and controlled hall in which to service the charities of our communities.

The third thing, of course, is if and when support for the hospitality industry takes place and we end up replacing the thousands of illegal machines in our communities today with government-controlled legal machines. There was really very little opposition at the hearings with regard to replacing the illegal machines. There was much talk from one member, the member for Essex South, who in the early stages felt that they didn't exist. He argued on numerous occasions that they didn't exist. He'd never seen one.

1600

By late September, after wasting a considerable amount of our time, as he's attempting to do at the present time, after wasting a considerable amount of the time of the committee, he did a reversal of form, and indeed when we were in Kenora and Thunder Bay and the local members appeared at the committee, supported by the chambers of commerce and motel operators, we saw another reversal up there. But my friend from Niagara has dealt with that type of behaviour during the committee hearings.

The individuals in the north and the individuals in the hospitality industry who appeared continually requested an opportunity to have these machines in their establishments, particularly since the people down the street were using the grey machines at the present time. It's interesting that one of the motels where the committee stayed, and that motel where we held hearings, actually had one of the grey machines in the cocktail lounge. Nobody on the other side of the House seemed to notice it, but take it from me that it was there.

A couple of days later the member for Essex South was heard to moan on about the illegal crime syndicates, as he did two minutes ago, using these machines to

launder their illegal gains. It's almost laughable to think of a Mafia don sitting down at one of these VLTs attempting to launder his illegal gains from the drug trade and doing it 25 cents or 50 cents at a time. But that's the type of argument that occupied our time in the filibuster that saw that we did not finish.

In Ottawa-Carleton, Mr Speaker, as you know, we have many of these machines, and they multiplied. They multiplied precisely after Quebec legalized machines in that province. They needed a place to go and they found it in Ottawa-Carleton. I've guaranteed the committee that the member for Ottawa-Vanier, the illustrious former mayor of Eastview before he changed the name of the city, would have no difficulty in identifying a few of them in his riding if he were to assist the member for Essex South.

We had witnesses at the hearings from Kitchener, two motel owners, who told of offers to put these grey machines in their establishments, as these people had done down the road. When questioned, they couldn't remember the people's name, but they did recall that they had an address on Saint-Antoine St in Montreal.

In Toronto the machines apparently are all owned by Buffalo people, and all the money goes outside the country; in Ottawa-Carleton all the money goes outside the province. Not quite as bad, but listen, problems — and there are problems — all stay within the province. What we are attempting to do is to turn that around and secure the revenue from the machines; machines which already exist, not paying any revenue to our province, to be replaced with machines that will provide revenue to the treasury of Ontario.

It's for that reason we have made the commitment of 2%, or \$9 million, towards problem-gaming research and the delivery of assistance programs. That's the very reason why the previous government made a commitment of \$1 million at the time of the introduction of the slot machines in Ontario, the first and only legal slot machines in Ontario, by the NDP government.

I suggest to you, if you look at the comparison, the Windsor casino in comparison to this bill, in that casino in Windsor, the revenue all comes to Ontario. In Ottawa we have a casino in Hull now, just a seven-iron shot from the city hall in Ottawa and an eight-iron shot from the back door of the Prime Minister's residence. When that building was being constructed, 99% of the workers' plates were Quebec; at the same time, the Corel Centre was being constructed, and over 60% of the construction plates were from Quebec. But 80% of the operation, the people who go to the Hull casino, are from Ontario, so 80% of the associated problems are in Ontario. In Windsor you've got a 60-40 split, Ontario and outside, but all the revenue stays in the province. Here we have the problems and we don't have any of the revenue. So it is with the grey machines. So it is with the existing machines that are pumping money outside this province. We have the problems, we don't have the revenue, and if we move in that direction, that's the reason we will move in that direction.

These problems existed long before the Windsor Casino, the Hull casino or the grey machines. Before

those we had the Montreal casino and the cheap trips to Atlantic City and Vegas, and of course we've always had bookmakers extending credit, giving people what they want. In my time on the bench I've experienced families ravaged by this type of addiction as well as other types of addiction, but that 1% to 2% was always there. They could always find satisfaction for what they craved in gaming halls on reserves or in gaming halls in speak-easies, the Vegas or Atlantic City trips or illegal bookmakers. Some of them could find it in legal gambling, maybe 20%, as much as 30% in lotteries, on racetracks and at church bingos.

I don't suggest by any stretch of the imagination that this is a simple issue. Everybody is aware that when liquor licensing and control came in, that didn't end bootlegging and it didn't end moonshine. But failure to take steps of any kind to exert control only favours those people who are constantly reaping large tax-free profits by breaking our laws.

Failure to move at this time — I guess if a person were cynical he'd have to look and see who's going to benefit. Who are the people in Buffalo and Quebec who own these machines, and why would anybody, the member for Welland-Thorold, the member for Essex South, want to benefit and save what these people have? You say the police can move in and do something.

Let me tell you, as a defence attorney in my younger days who learned something about bookmaking, the only real chance to get a conviction on a bookmaking charge is with a wiretap, and wiretaps are tougher today than they were when I was doing criminal law. The only real chance to get a conviction with a grey machine is to have somebody, an undercover police officer, go in there, play that machine and win. Winning is a problem because you don't know those grey machines; you don't know how they're programmed. Are they giving back 50 cents on the dollar? Are they giving back 30 cents on the dollar? Then you have to have a winner who will be free and available to testify. Of course that type of work takes officers away from surveillance of serious crimes.

The province of Alberta taught us how to do it. They said: "Once we legalize the machines any grey machine, which doesn't have a stamp on it from the provincial government, is illegal, whether it's there for enjoyment, for play, or whether it's there for gambling. If you've got one in your establishment, that will cost you your liquor licence." It takes it out of policing and into the administrative arm.

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If you're faced with legal machines, as Quebeckers are now, returning between 90 and 92 cents on the dollar, who in his right mind is going to play an illegal machine which provides no revenue to the province and may not be programmed to produce any more than 50 or 60 cents on the dollar? The answer is clear, and it's clear to me that this bill is a sorely needed step, not a first step, because prior governments have taken some very minor steps in the past to control what is really an avalanche of illegal gaming in this province. It doesn't go far enough, in this person's opinion, but certainly remains worth supporting in the step it does take.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Crozier: The member for Ottawa-Rideau makes a couple of points. One is that when he talked at length about bookmaking he said that you don't get rid of bookmaking because they won't limit the bet like some legal forms of betting do; they will continue to give credit, probably far above and beyond what would normally be given. Another reason is about payoffs. Those arguments apply to the illegal video slot machines that will not be eliminated. We've been told by Sergeant Moodie of the OPP, for example, to name one, that legalizing these machines will not eliminate the illegal machines for those very reasons. The owners of those machines will be able to give credit. They'll make 50% on the machines rather than the 10% or 20% that the government might give.

Admittedly, I don't know very much about gambling. My friends always told me, "If you want to learn anything about gambling, it costs you money to learn," and I guess that's why I didn't. I don't apologize for not knowing anything about gambling. I guess those who are more experienced gained their experience in a different way than I. I haven't seen an illegal machine. I'd like the member to tell me, when you walk into an establishment, how do you tell a legal machine, how do you tell an illegal machine and, as the Premier said last week when the city of North Bay complained about them, how do you tell those from a simulated machine?

Mr Kormos: It's important for us to understand exactly who this government is prepared to do business with and from whom it has received support for this endeavour. Accompanying that concern is the question about why the CISO report was never made public to the committee.

You see, one of the letters of support advocating the introduction of slot machines came from one Lucio Sandrin, director and shareholder of Cadith Entertainment Ltd. He manages more than 45 bingo halls and 150 charity casinos. He urged the committee that urgent consideration be given to including VLTs in bingo halls. The Tories were quite prepared to use Mr Sandrin's endorsement of this project. Who is Lucio Sandrin? Lucio Sandrin is a prominent former member of an organized crime syndicate, specifically the Paul Volpe family. Volpe, of course, was found shot to death here in 1983. His co-director, one Frank Di Maria, currently faces numerous racketeering and grand theft charges in Florida over alleged skimming of funds from charity bingos.

These mobster links, Sandrin and Di Maria, were exposed by the CISO report, which the committee repeatedly asked for. Clearly this government is prepared to do business with mobsters and their ilk. Clearly they're prepared to use whatever devices are necessary —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, just a minute, please. Take your seat, please.

Mr Kormos: Well, they were. Sandrin and Di Maria were their partners.

The Deputy Speaker: No, the member for Welland-Thorold, I won't accept that. You won't accuse the government of dealing with the mobs, dealing with the

Mafia. I don't accept that at all, not at all. It's a total lack of respect.

Mr Kormos: That's who they're dealing with. These are the names. These are the people. They are mobsters. Let them deny it.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, please.

Mr Hastings: Thank you, Mr Speaker. My apologies for being out of order, but the member, just after you admonished him, repeated the phrase. If you want to talk about guilt by association, the member for Welland-Thorold ought well to know by now that this is a favourite tactic they often use, the other side of the scene, of the street back in the 1950s. I specifically bring up the mention of Senator McCarthy. This is a McCarthyite tactic.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Take your seat, please.

Mr Hastings: I would ask the member for Welland-Thorold to withdraw his remark. We're not associated with mobsters and he ought to know better.

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat. Questions or comments?

Mr Wettlaufer: I'd like to provide some quotations justifying the VLTs. Rod Seiling, president of the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association, has stated: "We commend the government for taking this initiative. It will stimulate our industry without...government funding, it will... eliminate illegal machines and bring untaxed revenues into the mainstream economy and in the process help the government reduce the deficit."

We know it will provide jobs. I was out west this summer, in Montana and Alberta. I spoke with a number of waiters and waitresses in the restaurants there, where there are VLTs, and I asked a number of them what they thought of VLTs. To an individual, they all said, "Without them, half of us wouldn't have jobs."

In 1994 there was a study by Brandon University. The study indicated that the majority of people who play VLTs do so once or twice a week, about 30 minutes each time, and about \$10 per occasion is spent. The players tend to be higher-income young men between the ages of 24 and 44, and they are fully employed. On the other hand, the tickets that the other two parties would like to see used more and more are the break-open-type tickets, and they are purchased by low-income and welfare groups.

In New Brunswick, which has a Liberal government, and Saskatchewan, which has an NDP government, they're not afraid —

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired. The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Frankly, I don't care what government's in what province; they're wrong if they're doing it. The principle is wrong. What gets me is watching some of these pious Tories, who on other issues are so moralistic, get up in this House and defend what this government is doing. I admire those who would be critical, or at least those who are silent. I don't want to say they're complaisant by being silent, but at least they're being silent in defending this nonsense that's taking place.

While I may not use the characterization of my friend from Welland-Thorold as he speaks in a colourful

fashion, it's rather interesting who makes representations in favour of this. If you don't think that's who wants it: That's who wants it. They sure do. You have to understand that's what's happening with this issue.

Even the charity casinos have had a problem. I belong to a service club. No doubt we've run charity casinos without the VLTs. I don't like any of this stuff. I know it exists, but what we're really worried about is you're now going to have them in every bar and restaurant in this province and every neighbourhood. It's very expedient what you're doing. It's very easy, it's very opportunistic and it's preying upon the most vulnerable people in our society with the most addictive and alluring kind of gambling. That's what we're talking about.

I wish you'd forget that you're Tories or Liberals or New Democrats. I condemn a Liberal government that would do this, as I have in New Brunswick. I condemn all of that.

It's all to fund the tax cut that you are so much in favour of. You need the revenue. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt said you're going to have to borrow \$13 billion to give a tax cut. So to avoid that borrowing, you're going to plunk these machines in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario, and that's wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau, you have two minutes.

Interjection: Tell Frank McKenna that.

Mr Bradley: I agree. I'll tell Frank McKenna that. I'll write to him today and tell him that. You don't understand. This is beyond an issue of partisanship. You just take your orders from your Premier.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines, order, please.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham East, order.

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Mr Guzzo: In reply to the member for Essex South, let me just explain that I have trouble with the issue that the people with the grey machines can give credit. I don't understand how a person operating a grey machine can give credit. You have to have the coin to put in them.

Mr Bradley: They do it in casinos.

Mr Guzzo: What are you telling me, that every bartender who serves a drink off the cuff to a regular customer is breaking the law? No. You see, to make the bet you have to have —

Mr Crozier: I'm proud of the fact that I don't know anything about it.

Mr Guzzo: I know, but try and understand. Look, I know it's difficult, but try and understand. It's like the casino. To play the machine, you have to have the coin. To bet with the bookie you don't. If it's two days before, three days before, payday, no problem — he only wants to see you and collect once a week, you know? Nobody knows better than the crying filibusterer from Welland-Thorold, a man I learned to respect so much when he was a practising lawyer. I look forward to the day when he will go back to being a practising lawyer because —

Mr Kormos: Tell us about Di Maria. Tell us why the CISO report was kept secret.

Mr Guzzo: Let's also explain this. I'm not suggesting any motive, but why in life would anybody want to protect the owners of these grey machines now? Why would you want to protect them? I simply ask the question.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think the member had his full time when he rose. I think he was cut off some of his time. If he wanted, I would give our consent to reply, because I think something happened that he didn't — is that right or not?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 75 dealing mainly with what we call video lottery terminals or electronic slot machines, or whatever one wants to call them. Just to follow up on the previous member, the member for Ottawa-Rideau's argument, which I gather is one that the caucus supports, and that is that because there are a number of illegal machines out there we are going to legalize this, I would say several things about it. One is that the people I have the most confidence in in terms of understanding this issue, and that is our police organizations in this province, disagree with the government.

In fact there's a police organization specifically set up in this province to look at the matter. They studied it in depth and they say the government is wrong. To the member for Ottawa-Rideau, who says that this will get rid of illegal gambling, the police say no, it will not. The organization called CISO, which is the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, made up of some of our senior police officers, couldn't have been clearer. They warned us about proceeding down the road to passing this bill legalizing electronic slot machines. Part of their report — and this is in a briefing note that the government hid from the committee up until just two or three weeks ago when, under pressure, the government was forced to release the briefing note.

This is from our senior police officers: "Legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling, which has increased with interest shown in" legal gambling. In other words, what the police are saying is the point — although I took from the member for Ottawa-Rideau's argument the opposite of his conclusion, and that is, that if you legalize electronic slot machines it will not eliminate the illegal ones. If you were really interested in eliminating the illegal ones right now, you would say, "Any bar or restaurant where there is one of these machines is operating illegally and we are going to go in and take it out." Why is that not happening? I have no idea why it's not happening.

The member for Ottawa-Rideau said, "They're focusing on more important matters," I think was the language he used. Well, I regard this as quite important. If, as you say, this is organized crime operating these illegal slot machines, I would have thought you would have been — and you say you've seen them. How many times have you reported them when you see them? Have you ever phoned the police to say, "I've spotted one?" My colleague here has not seen them, but I gather you've seen them. The question for all the members here is, if you've seen them, you know they're operating illegally, I'm surprised you haven't blown the whistle.

The Metropolitan Toronto Police had a similar conclusion. This is a letter that they sent and this is what the staff inspector, who has, I gather, responsibility, said: "I believe those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect. Illegal machines, which are not subject to taxation or return-percentage monitoring, are virtual cash collectors."

In other words, the Metropolitan Toronto Police, which perhaps in Ontario have the most resources of any single police organization to put in it, have raised a flag and have said to us: "If any of you believe that legalizing these machines will eliminate the illegal ones, you are wrong. All the experience proves you're wrong." Why? Because the government, by its own numbers, is going to take a large take on this; \$500 million of the taxpayers' money you're going to take right off the top of these VLTs. I gather from what the police say that the illegal ones will take less. They will be a better betting operation than the legal ones. That's what the police say to us.

So for the members who have bought the argument that this will eliminate the illegal ones, you're wrong. The police say you're wrong. The major organizations set up to investigate this say you're wrong.

Now, I know how you got to this position. Before the last election, those who were interested in legalizing VLTs I think probably talked to everyone of the caucuses; certainly they talked to members on our caucus, and it was: "This is a cash cow. There is no doubt about that. It is \$500 million of taxpayers' money that will flow in to the province. There is no doubt of that."

What happened? Without question, you got elected. Believe me, when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves were in opposition, they were totally against these electronic slot machines.

Mr Bradley: Completely against.

Mr Phillips: Completely against them, and said so on many occasions. Why? Because the experience in other jurisdictions is, yes, for the government they rake in a lot of money, but for the community they cause an enormous amount of pain.

Any of you who have experience with people who have been hurt by addictive gambling, if you've ever had experience with an individual — well, the member for Ottawa-Rideau, I think in your previous experience as a judge you indicated that you'd had experience with the victims of addictive gambling — it is a tragic situation. That's why Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, opposed these electronic slot machines.

But I have no doubt that, once elected, they looked at the plan, looked at the promise on the tax cut — and I know you're going to go ahead with the tax cut. I'm sure that on the weekend there was a pep rally at the Conservative convention around it. I'm sure of that, and I'm convinced that you are totally committed to the tax cut, the 30% tax scheme where — and this is indisputable — the best-off in our province are going to benefit the most. How are you going to fund that? I've no doubt that Mr Eves, as he looked at the finances, said, "We've got a problem here." Suddenly a matter of principle becomes a matter of practical politics, and one sets aside the principle and says, "Maybe we'll approve these electronic slot machines." Because make no mistake, it is a cash cow.

This is not the only government, as we've discussed here. Right across North America governments are embracing gambling. If you look at our own provincial budget, you'll see that the gambling revenues in Ontario three years ago were \$600 million; they're now \$1.3 billion. They have substantially more than doubled in three years. It is the plan of the Ontario government to see that probably double in the next two years as you introduce more casinos and at least 20,000 electronic slot machines.

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By the way, this will take as much money out of the Ontario economy as the tax cut is putting into it. It is ironic that at a time when you say what's needed is for the hardworking men and women of this province to have more resources to buy homes, to handle their families, to look after their families, at the same time as you are implementing the tax cut designed to do that, it is your plan to take as much money back out of their pockets in gambling. Frankly, the research I've seen suggests it will be a small percentage of the population that becomes addicted to gambling where you'll get a very large percentage of this take.

The second point I want to make is that there's no doubt that what has driven this is the Minister of Finance and the Premier looking at the tax cut promise, recognizing that it was — on our side we say a mistake; you obviously don't agree with us — recognizing that you have some real problems in implementing it and saying, "How are we going to find some more money?" and that's where the change of heart took place with the Premier.

I would say on the first point about this eliminating illegal gambling: It won't happen. The police say it won't happen. You are going to broaden the electronic slot machines. Right now, if you see an electronic slot machine, it's an illegal electronic slot machine, but you're going to have legal and illegal ones and if you had problems before, the problems are going to be multiplied.

I might add that the member for Ottawa-Rideau said that credit was part of the illegal operations. There's another form of credit: credit cards. If you go to a casino and watch people running to the card and running up their credit cards at 17.5% interest, that's real credit. Anyone who has the experience with compulsive gamblers will know that —

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: The members across are saying something I can't quite hear other than the Ottawa-Rideau member who mentioned credit. I say to him that if you have seen credit being taken at the betting offices, at the window — Champions I think it is; I'm not sure of the name of it — you will appreciate that legal credit is a significant problem for gamblers.

Where's all this heading? If you believe that the people of Ontario need to have more money in their pockets to get the economy going, and if that's what the tax cut was all about, how can you support implementing gambling taxes? These are huge taxes on gambling where you are looking at \$1.3 billion this year in terms of taxes on gambling, and according to your plans you're going to double that. How can you justify taking it out of the

pockets of Ontarians, presumably so you can fund your tax cut to the wealthy? How can you justify that? If that's what you believe, that the government of Ontario is taking more money than it should out of people's pockets, how can you justify putting these huge taxes on gambling? Where will it all lead? I guess we have to make our own judgement.

I think that three years from now you will look back on this decision with regret for this reason: There is a limit to how much money you can take out of people from gambling. In my opinion we're getting close to the limit. You are building a society on gambling revenue that I believe will dry up. It obviously won't be eliminated. The Ontario Lottery Corp has been around for a long while and has been very successful; casinos continue to be large revenue generators for Ontario. But there is a limit, and in my judgement the limit is reached when every jurisdiction in North America is aggressively opening casinos, expanding video lottery terminals and expanding gambling.

The member for Ottawa-Rideau indicated that the bill doesn't go far enough. He said there is illegal book-making, and I gather from his point of view — he'll be able to respond in 15 minutes or so — he'd like to expand the bill to include betting on sporting events in a much broader way than is currently permitted. That is an interesting proposition but it's part of an appetite that says there is no end to what we can take from people's gambling.

I would say the first problem we will run into is that revenue will begin to slow down and head down. The second problem is, make no mistake about it, that there are going to be some significant casualties in this. The member for Ottawa-Rideau made that point when he said many Ottawa citizens cross the river to gamble at the casino in Hull and Ottawa is left with the problems. I gather he's referring to problems of bankruptcy and individuals who lose far more money than they can afford to lose and the tragedy of that ending up in the family and with individuals. But make no mistake about it: Any research I've looked at suggests that 2% to 3% of the population has a serious gambling problem and up to 10% could be classified as problem gamblers. With the 2% to 3% you look at in every community dramatically increasing the gambling activity, I don't think there's any doubt that we are going to live with the fallout of that.

If you are supporting the bill because there are 20,000 illegal machines out there and this will eliminate them, the experts don't agree with that. Experts say it certainly doesn't eliminate it, it probably won't even decrease it, and the illegal ones look like they can operate more cheaply, more efficiently, and therefore may offer a better gambling alternative for gamblers than the legal ones. Logic tells me it's not going to do it; our major police organizations tell us it won't be eliminated.

If you support the bill because it will be helpful to some of our business community and certainly the restaurant community, and we've all got many friends in the restaurant and hospitality community who strongly support it, and they build their business on the basis of electronic slot machine revenue, I have two concerns: Their customers' money is being taken out of the econ-

omy and put into the government's coffers, and eventually many of them won't be their customers because they won't be able to afford it.

As I speculate, it is only a matter of time before gambling begins to head down. It'll never be eliminated, as we all know, but as more and more casinos across North America are built, as clearly we will have our third casino very shortly in Ontario and I suspect there'll be several more, as the 50 — I think it's 50 — mini-casinos will be built and take a fair bit of the revenue, as all of these people compete for a limited pie of gambling opportunity, I'm afraid we're going to end up inheriting the problems of the people who've built their businesses on that basis.

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I go back to where all of this started, because I've been around here now since 1987 and I've heard Mr Harris and Mr Eves speak about the problems of gambling revenue and about why they didn't support it when they were in opposition. I also know how tempting this revenue is. Those who are anxious for the bill to be passed, the people in the industry, can say to the Minister of Finance: "Here is \$500 million of revenue sitting there for you. Just approve these 20,000 video lottery terminals." So it's very seductive, and clearly the government has decided, in my opinion because of the revenue demands, to embrace it, but we're all going to be left with the fallout of it. It's not as if we haven't been warned. It's not as if all of this is going to come as a surprise. We have the experience in all these other jurisdictions that our major police organizations have looked at and they have warned us about the problems.

I don't know whether any of the government members found it curious that the Solicitor General had never read the report of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario. Why, the person who works for the gaming organization in the province of Ontario has read it and actually commented publicly on it. But neither the Solicitor General nor, I gather, anyone on his staff has read what has to be perhaps the most important report that he would be dealing with on the matter of gambling.

I would have thought that this organization, heavily funded by the province, having conducted a fairly major study, the Solicitor General would have wanted to understand its concerns in detail and certainly would have briefed the cabinet on that. But I gather that didn't take place. We're being asked now to approve something where we have our major police organizations telling us that the fundamental reason many in the Conservative caucus are supporting this is not going to work out. The reason you're supporting it is to get rid of the illegal machines, and the police organizations are actually saying they think the opposite is going to happen, that in some respects there will be more illegal activity.

It's never very helpful in politics to say, "I told you so," because often it's too late then, but I think we've got so much evidence here from other jurisdictions, from police, from our charitable organizations — charitable organizations are going to get a part of this revenue so some of them are perhaps satisfied: "I may not agree with video lottery terminals, but at least we're going to get a portion of the revenue."

I would say if you are looking at economic activity and what drives economic activity for Ontario, you implemented a tax cut effective July 1, and in this fiscal year it will have an impact of \$1.1 billion. That's the tax break, the tax reduction. But at exactly the same time as you do that, you're implementing a bill that will take out of the taxpayers of Ontario at least \$500 million of revenue, and the lottery corporation is moving quickly to expand its games, looking to extract as least as much money as the tax cut has put back into the pockets of people. That's unfortunate, because I think that the economic activity as a result of that will be at best a wash.

I am pleased to participate in the debate, to say I understand why the government's doing it. You get \$500 million of taxes on gambling. I would say that the economic activity as a result of this will be minimal. I am afraid that three and four years down the road, the government will find that its revenue from this source has been a very temporary thing. The problems that will be created with problem gamblers, I don't think we have a clear appreciation of the depth of the problem that is.

I think the bill is a mistake. I wish the government would reconsider it. I wish the Conservative members would take a good, hard look at what our police organizations are saying about the bill and I wish that the government would appreciate — perhaps they do, but I wish they would appreciate more — that this is fundamentally driven by the Minister of Finance and Premier Harris wanting to find \$500 million to help get them out of a financial commitment they made that I think was wrong at the start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I listened with interest to the comments of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He may not have attended the committee session when we had the video conferencing in the Macdonald Block with the lottery authority people from the maritime provinces and also with the people from Quebec and the people from Manitoba, a very efficient way of obtaining real information about what has happened on the ground with respect to illegal machines in the other eight Canadian provinces that have legal video lotteries.

What we learned that day — and I'm not sure whether the member for Scarborough-Agincourt was present; if he was, he has forgotten — is that with the introduction of video lotteries in the province of Quebec, 8,000 illegal machines were put out of business and are in storage in Quebec. This is the reality of the Canadian experience to date on this subject, not what theoretical experts may talk about, not what the member for Scarborough-Agincourt may imagine, but the reality is when those legal machines were brought into Quebec they forced out illegal operators, which of course makes sense because those persons in the hospitality industry who received the machines don't want to be competing with illegal machines and those who profit from the illegal machines.

We know that those who are profiting now from the illegal machines in Ontario are not friends of anyone in this chamber. They're illegal operators, they're persons in

Buffalo and other places. We heard that at the committee hearings. I'm sure that no member of this House wants that situation to continue — that is, that persons belonging to unsavoury sections of our society profit from this illegal operation, which we can reduce dramatically, as was done in reality in Quebec.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt because it's always so calm and reasoned and so full of accuracies.

I always express a wish, as I know the member for Scarborough-Agincourt probably does and my friend from Essex South, and that is that somebody would put some people in the cabinet so they wouldn't just have to defend the government position time after time after time when it's an indefensible position.

Often what you find is once they get into the cabinet, you don't have to listen to those representations made and what the Premier wants to hear. I look across at my friend the member for London North whom I've sat with for a long time, and must believe that she must be beside herself over the fact that there's going to be in virtually every bar and restaurant and every neighbourhood in Ontario, a video lottery machine or an electronic slot machine, as they're called.

I know she would be very concerned about that, because what you're saying in effect as a government is, "Because something's illegal, we will make it legal and we will get the profits." So, presumably, if selling cocaine is illegal, and it is, if one followed that logic, one would see the government taking over cocaine sales to the people of this province. I don't hear anybody recommending that, and nor would I, but that's the same logic that you're using.

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As the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said, if there's a problem out there, all you have to do is close them down, wherever they are. Find the people, put them in jail, do whatever you have to do to get rid of them, if that's the problem. But the real problem is that this government wants the revenue; that's what it's all about. The fight is over who is going to get the revenue. The Premier wants the revenue because he's losing so much by giving a tax break to his friends that he has to borrow money in order to give that tax break to rich friends in the province. Conrad Black may agree with this, but I'm going to tell you that not many other people are going to agree, upon reflection.

Mr Kormos: Again, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, when he speaks, surely, for myself as he does for the member for Essex South, Mr Crozier, forces us to recall the sad course of events during the committee hearings, the input that was provided, the warning after warning after warning that was delivered to this government about the pain and the ill that will be imposed upon communities as a result of these slots, the impact on people, on families.

I recall when we first spoke about the addictiveness of this, the giggling and the tittering that erupted among the Tory ranks. There was this locker-room sort of response. In fact, when we speak about the sickness of addiction, we're talking about something that's incredibly serious and that's incredibly devastating for so many people and

so many families in this province and in this country. They refused to listen to the warnings addressed to them.

We heard the report from Professor Alan Young that talked about the potential illegality of this whole scheme, that it's in contravention of the Criminal Code; one of the leading criminal law experts in this province and country; again, total indifference to what Alan Young has to say to them, total indifference to what the statistics and data and research have to say. Then they hide the CISO report, they hide the police report which tells us that mobsters, organized crime is already in the picture; that some of the very same supporters of this government are people actively involved in the mob who are going to make a whole lot of money in collaboration with them and at the expense of hardworking people and their families here in Ontario. What's sad is that this government has been unbending, totally unresponsive to the realities. One suspects their motives. Are they corrupt too?

Mr Guzzo: With regard to the comments of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, I'd like to respond. I think there are certainly arguments to be made, and we've heard them. But there are other people in the enforcement business, in the police business, who disagree with the statements that he has suggested. Certain types of gambling of a legal nature will, I definitely concur, increase illegal gambling somewhat. But certainly in the question of a casino in Windsor, I am hard-pressed to accept that there has been an increase in illegal gambling.

With regard to the direct question as to whether or not I've ever reported it, have I ever blown the whistle, let me assure you, sir, that I have discussed it ad nauseam with many officers in my own home town and here in Toronto. You know the problem as well as I do. You know how difficult it is to get a conviction. You have to have someone who has played and who has won and who will testify in order to secure that. That is a difficulty. Don't think simply phoning or blowing the whistle is going to do anything.

We had a situation here a couple of weeks ago where a man spit in the face of another person in front of 30,000 witnesses, and they had a videotape of it, and now 100 million or 200 million people have seen the videotape. Any charges laid? You go home and spit in somebody's face and watch how fast something happens.

There are plays under the surface at work here, there's no question about it, but don't stand and simplify a very complicated issue. I have respect for the member for St Catharines. If it's a moral issue, if it's something that offends the —

Interjection: It's a qualified respect.

Mr Guzzo: Of course, qualified respect. But on the basis of the evidence before us, the evidence goes both ways and the preponderance of the evidence is in our favour.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: I'm curious. I gather that the member for Ottawa-Rideau has seen illegal machines but decided, because it might be too tough to get a conviction, he'd just keep quiet. It was curious. I would have thought you would have at least let the police make that judgement.

Mr Bradley: Is that an accessory before the fact?

Mr Phillips: An accessory. Just again to go back to the fundamental argument we are making, and that is that this will eliminate illegal machines, the police, the organization I respect, disagree with you.

Mr Bradley: The Metro police.

Mr Phillips: Here's what the Metro police said:

"As I alluded to...I am not completely satisfied that we Ontarians are fully aware of the impact that VLTs will have on our quality of life...."

"I believe those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect."

The police officers say you're wrong. The opposite is going to happen. There are going to be more of these illegal machines. Our major police organization designed to give us warning on this said, "We have prepared a comprehensive report entitled Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns, 1995." The police were crystal clear on it: legalized gambling has never replaced illegal gambling. "The analysis shows that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there is potential for abuse in the legal gambling sector."

The point I'm making is that the police, the organization that looked at this, have a comprehensive study saying, "Listen, if you legalize them, you're going to make the problem worse." For the members who are worried about these gangsters from Buffalo, the police are saying it's going to be worse, not better, when we pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: I'm pleased today to speak to Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest. Like my colleague the member for Welland-Thorold, I want to talk about the title of this bill for three, four, five minutes. In my view, this government is very good at hiring American-type hirelings who come up with such titles. The way they talk about these titles suggests certain things so as to lead the public to believe that they're about to introduce something that's in the public interest, but it's far from it. If people only follow titles of bills, then they will be convinced that somehow they're doing something to control what they consider to be a particular problem. So most people don't go into the depth of bills as we do because that's our job. They don't, however, have the time, and sometimes the interest, to get involved in understanding the particular bills that we introduce. When they see a title such as this one, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, they actually believe this government is doing something useful to control a very difficult problem connected to alcohol and gaming.

You see, again connected to the titles of their bills, I'm reminded of the other bill for which I'm a critic, the tenant protection package. That's the title of the other bill they introduced and debated. We had countless deputations. The fascinating thing about these hirelings they have brought together, I suspect with some good help from the Americans, is that they do a very good job of naming their bills. When you look at the tenant protection package, it suggests that there's something in that package —

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I'm being nagged by a colleague of mine who is of Italian-Canadian extraction. You have to encourage him to stop because it's difficult to concentrate. Tell him he can't speak Italian in the assembly, all right, Mr Speaker? Do me a favour. Help me out, okay?

1700

Mr Pouliot: What are you asking Bert to do?

Mr Marchese: I'm asking the Speaker to help me out.

To get back to the topic, because I know they don't want to listen to me — I understand that — they introduced a bill called the tenant protection package. Mr Speaker, you're an intelligent man. You look at that title and you say: "Tenant protection package. That seems to be designed for tenants, doesn't it?" As I look at it I say yes, it's a bill that was about to be introduced that speaks to rent control or something within it that is supposed to help tenants but doesn't. Everything connected in that package is an assault on tenants.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I ask for your attention, and if you can't give that, at least give him your quiet, please.

Mr Marchese: Thank you kindly, Mr Speaker, for your assistance. If you look at that other bill, I'm using that example as a way of suggesting this bill has similarities that the public needs to understand. What does that tenant protection package say? It decontrols rents. What it effectively means is that when tenants move, they are going to be paying higher rents.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought we were discussing Bill 75 on gaming, not what he's talking about, rent controls.

The Acting Speaker: It is a point of order. I have listened to him and I think he is discussing the debate the way he wants to.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, thank you for listening because it's important for someone in the House to make sure that when there are points of order, they are connected to what I was saying. You were listening when I said the reason I linked the tenant protection package to this bill was because the titles are very elusive. They suggest something that is not the case.

I was talking about how the tenant protection package doesn't speak the truth in its title and I said, "How does it do that?" When they decontrol rents, it doesn't help the tenants. They're going to get an increase in rent as soon as they move out of that apartment.

Second, the rent registry will disappear once the bill is introduced, as proposed, and that will hurt the tenants because it allowed them to know what the previous tenants were paying. Once you get rid of that rent registry, they won't know any more.

Third, the Rental Housing Protection Act will disappear, and what does that speak to? It speaks to the fact that now those who own those buildings will be able to tear those buildings down or convert them to condominiums, and the people who live in rental accommodation are going to have fewer places to live that will be affordable. I say this to suggest that the title doesn't speak the truth, as the title of the tenant protection package doesn't speak the truth, which does not protect

tenants. Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, doesn't speak the truth. It is not in the public interest.

Mr Spina: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That's misleading. That's unparliamentary.

Mr Marchese: He's interrupting again, Mr Speaker. Will you speak to this member?

Mr Spina: That's unparliamentary, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: It is a point of order, whether or not it's parliamentary. I don't see anything unparliamentary about the speaker's presentation.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I want to thank you again for listening. I've been interrupted twice on a point of order when there was order. I really would urge the member to listen carefully to what I'm saying.

The title of this bill speaks to something that is for the public interest that in fact is quite the contrary. It is not in the public interest to introduce these very sophisticated slot machines. You can say what you like, but the majority of the population understands that this is not in their interest. By and large, Conservative members of society, your supporters, liberal-minded people and social democrats do not believe that having sophisticated slot machines is something that should be at everybody's corner. Nobody believes that.

The sad thing that you are enraptured with and captured by is the whole issue of money. As one of your members said earlier on, it's a job creation scheme. Is this what you mean when you say Ontario is open for business? Is this what you meant? Is this what you had in mind? Because you fine Conservative members who talked about creating 120,000 jobs a year have understood that this too was not possible, that it wasn't real, so you thought, since unemployment went up from 8.6% to 9.3% —

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, there's crossfire here and it's very difficult to —

The Acting Speaker: I would ask those both in the debater's own party and those of the others to give him your attention, please.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would urge the Conservative member to come and sit in front of me so the public can have a look at him and can hear what he has to say, or both of them perhaps.

Mr Wettlaufer: You're being heckled by your own party.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Conservative Member, and the other member. If he can come on this other side so the public can see who you are and what you have to say, I would appreciate that. I think the public deserves to know what they have to say, and in the two-minute rebuttal I want one or both of them to comment on this bill and what I have to say. I urge them to do so, other than the cheap heckling that goes behind me to distract me.

Is this what these fine Tories, this one in front of me, this one to the left of me, talk about when they say, "We, the Conservative Party, are open for business"? Do you realize how bankrupt this political party is and has become when the only idea they have to create jobs is to open Ontario for these sophisticated slot machines, the one-armed bandits, as my friend from Welland-Thorold

refers to them? Is this the fine, innovative idea that they can bring to this province to create jobs?

Mr Speaker, I say to you and to the public that's listening, it's pitiful. It really is a pitiful thing when the only thing this poor government can come up with for job creation is slot machines. Don't you believe that's a pitiful thing? Don't you Conservative members of society who voted for these fine gentlemen and women think that it's a pitiful thing?

Interjection: We're not creating the jobs.

Mr Marchese: You see, this is not going to create jobs. This will not create jobs. In the short run it will create some jobs, and in the long run you're going to have tremendous societal pain. It will create a sick society, and if not created in full, it will help to create this sick society. That's what this will do.

Mr Wettlaufer: The unemployment that you guys created didn't cause any problems?

Mr Marchese: This fine gentlemen speaks about unemployment that we created. Unemployment went up under them. This party that speaks about a party that's open for business, we had higher and greater unemployment under them than we did with us. Unemployment goes up and they say, "We created jobs." You must, Speaker and the public, marvel at this fine Tory intelligence that can say, "We create jobs," and yet unemployment is going up.

Now, the public understands. University students who have been educated in our university system are unemployed, and not just university students. The parents of those students know that unemployment is high and getting higher and that their prospect for getting a job in this province is becoming more difficult. The prospect to get a job under this government is becoming more difficult because as they are forced to reduce wages in this province, there is very little left that's good by way of a job other than the McJobs or the jobettes that they're helping to create. Other than this, they have no other job creation scheme. It's the slot-machine job creation scheme. It's pitiful. That's why I'm saddened by this, because that's surely not what you meant when you said, "We're open for business."

1710

I want to move on to another aspect of this bill, and my friend from Welland-Thorold touched on it. What this bill does is to abolish the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario and the Gaming Control Commission, with very little consultation, I would add. They're now creating an Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Now, what's the point around this in terms of how that's established that I believe is a particular problem? It is a commission that will have members appointed by the minister, who will be appointed at the whim of the minister to reflect, presumably, the ideology of the minister and the government.

You see, when you have an arm's-length agency or commission, it is removed from government. What it means is that there is less and less accountability in two ways: one, in our inability to scrutinize the appointments, in our inability to understand how they will appoint and what criteria they will use, and therefore it gives us and the general public in the communities out there who are

very concerned very little to be able to say we disagree with those appointments. We think it's a problem. How do we get to them? How do we have a voice to make sure, once you've established it, as we know you will, that we can control who gets appointed, or at least have a say?

In that regard they are less accountable, and the fact that they become an arm's-length commission means, by its very nature, that they're less accountable to government because when they do something as an independent commission, government says, "Well, we don't have much of a say, you see, because we created this arm's-length distance with this commission, so they basically can run it as they wish," which is what this government wants. They want to create this arm's-length commission to be able to distance the politics of that commission and what it does from themselves so that if there is a problem, as I can tell you there will be, the government can say, "We had nothing to do with it; we just set it up."

The problem is that it will become, in itself, an unaccountable body by way of its appointments and by way of our inability to influence that particular body. In this regard I have some serious concerns, and so should the public.

The sad thing about all of this is, of course, the members have very little control of this because, as I've said earlier with another bill, once the Premier and his staff of hirelings have made up their minds, it is beyond their control. They can't control it any more, and the only time they learn about the error of their ways is when they make a full turn. When you make a full turn here, if you ever make it here at the next election, you will know the error of the ways in which you practise politics. We've all been there; it's not as if we don't know. We've all been there, so we know.

The question is, are you able to learn from those of us who've had these experiences to be able to say, "We don't think our Conservative friends in our communities like it"? I know your wealthy friends like it, but the regular person who voted for you in Etobicoke doesn't like this.

Mr Hastings: Did you do a survey to find out?

Mr Marchese: Well, I think you should. Listen, you are in power; you haven't done a survey.

Mr Hastings: You're going to hear from me.

Mr Marchese: Please. You're dreaming, you're blabbering away without any intelligence. Please do your survey. Do your survey, because you will find in your community of Etobicoke that they don't like this. They don't like these sophisticated slot machines on their corners, close to their schools, close to their communities, close to their churches. They don't want it; we know this. But you know this too. I want to hear your two-minute rebuttal, because I think the people of Etobicoke should hear what you have to say again. That was the second point I wanted to make.

The third point I want to talk about is how it is that when you're in opposition, oh, it's so wonderful when you're here. I recall the few of you who were here when we were the government, how you opposed so many things. How some of the cabinet ministers, for example, opposed the possibility of reducing the number of MPPs

in this House. When in government, the Premier and his hirelings and the gunslingers decided, "We're going to get rid of 27 MPPs," and those poor ministers who, when here, spoke against it, were stuck, silenced. They were silenced because, what could they say to the Premier, "We disagree with you now that you've introduced it"? But they're on the record as having to maintain a voice for rural Ontario and northern Ontario. Lo and behold, they get elected, and they forget what they said when they were here.

I tell you, it's pitiful. When they were here they spoke against these things that they're about to introduce. But, you see, once they're in government they change, and it's sad. It's sad because this has become their job scheme. This is not a money-back guarantee. There is no conscience in gambling of this sort. You can't control these slot machines once they're in there. You won't be able to do that. Communities won't be able to do that except that once they discover that their children are affected by it, that one of the partners in their family is affected by it, they will fight this government as they're doing with so many other things. But the problem is, they have to be affected or inflicted with a problem to be able to then respond to it.

At the moment it's still at the stages of a legislative bill. Once they see its practice, once they see how it affects them individually and their families and their communities, they'll be back. They will come back and talk to you fine Tory members and say: "Where did you go wrong? Who gave you the licence to introduce these sophisticated slot machines in this province?"

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It wasn't in the Common Sense Revolution.

Mr Marchese: Was it in the Common Sense Revolution? Did you read it?

Mr Martin: No, it wasn't.

Mr Marchese: We didn't see it? That fine revolutionary document with great ideological Conservative zeal, was it in there?

Mr Martin: No, it wasn't in there.

Mr Marchese: I didn't see it.

Mr Martin: It wasn't in there.

Mr Marchese: So how did it happen that somehow the Mike Harris hirelings made a U-turn and said: "Well if it wasn't in there, we'll just bring it right in. We'll just make a U-turn. It's all right for us. We're in power. You can do illegal turns when you're in power"? And they do. You can see all these illegal turns they're making.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I urge you to assist me once again. He's really becoming an irritant. He's irritating me and he's doing it in Italian. Mr Speaker, again, please. I don't mind in the two-minute rebuttal to listen to him in Italian, French, English, whatever language.

That's the third point I wanted to make, that it wasn't in their fine, zealous bill, the fine revolutionary bill. They made a U-turn and made it legal now. They're going to make all this stuff legal. It's a problem.

Then we get back to the whole point of who they are listening to as they introduce this bill. You see, we are all informed by someone in society when we introduce a bill.

So the question is, who is informing this government about why this particular bill is a good bill?

Let me quote, and then we can check out to see whether or not they're listening to this particular group. The Ontario Provincial Police, the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, say, "The government has presented organized crime groups with the vehicle for them to carry on with the job they know best."

I listen to this, I read this for the record, and then I wonder, are they being informed by this particular group, which has a great deal of expertise in this field? But they have not listened to them. They've ignored them. They have completely disregarded a body that has a great deal of expertise in the field.

They go on further to add this: "Legal gambling has never replaced illegal gambling; in fact, it complements it." Isn't that interesting? "Legal gambling has never replaced illegal gambling; in fact, it complements it." What it's saying is this, in simple language in case they missed it — because you see, in their comments and everything they've said, they say, "No, that's not true," and so on. This group, which has expertise, has said, "Illegal gambling will remain." In fact, their attempt to legalize it will increase it. It complements it. That's what this group says.

1720

I ask all of you here, who is informing you? Where are you getting your advice and your knowledge from? Frankly, when I do something, I like to be informed. I like to take advice from the people who are in the field, and if the people in the field are saying, "You've got a problem," and you don't listen, then you have to fabricate someone who can tell you why this is a good thing. You have to fabricate, you see. You have to create someone out there who says, "This is a good thing." You can talk, you can raise your eyebrows, you can say: "This is great. This is a job creation scheme. Don't worry, little kiddies won't be affected, families won't be affected, communities won't be affected." You can say that, but I know that if all of you were here — all of you, without any exception — you would be red like a red tomato, like the former Minister of Health is every time she stands up to speak on issues of health. All of you would be imploding at the thought of the introduction of such a bill — all of you.

Mr Martin: You'd be enraged.

Mr Marchese: Enraged. Imploding. That means exploding internally. That's what they would do.

Mr Martin: You'd be beside yourselves.

Mr Marchese: Beside themselves indeed.

This is the point: It is a job creation scheme. Why? Because they need money. They're desperate for money. And why are they desperate for money? Because they need to give away a tax cut. To whom? To people who've got money. Over and over again I say this. Every time we ask questions, these fine ministers never answer them. They never answer the questions. When we talk about the tax cut and what it will do, they say, "It will create jobs," and that is all they tell you. But we know.

The federal Liberal government knows that a tax cut, especially in a recession, is the worst time to give people a break. The Liberals understand this because they know it's a problem. They can't give a tax cut.

Mr Baird: He changed his mind. He's going to do it.

Mr Marchese: Oh, I understand that, but in this they're right. They know that if you give a tax cut to the very wealthy, you've got to take it from somewhere else. That's why the cuts in health are real. You can say, with all the blabberings of all the ministers, that you've added to the health care budget, but you haven't. You've cut \$1.3 billion out of your budget for health, and you're the only ones who don't know it.

My mother's in the hospital now, and I see it. I see it with all the patients there and all the people who are visiting there. They know that you've cut \$1.3 billion. So it is a most laughable inanity to hear ministers saying, "Oh, health is important to everybody, including and especially the poor, and that's why we've added \$300 million." It's laughable. It is the most pitiful inanity that I've ever heard.

These fine folk here take billions out of the economy — health, social services and education — and then they create a program that costs maybe \$100 million or \$200 million and they say, "We've added to the health budget." Mr Speaker, doesn't that make you laugh? But laugh with tragic tears. It isn't laughing with emotion, with fun; it is laughing with tragedy in our eyes. They're tragic tears.

I heard Mr Johnson the other day when he said this. He said, "Health is an important matter, especially to the poor, and that's why we've added \$300 million." I almost broke up, and I tell you, the people of Ontario break up too, because they know by experiential fact that money has been taken out of the system.

They can talk about percentages. Have you noticed, Mr Speaker — I don't know if you did, but I did — that they talk about percentages when they speak about cuts? They don't talk about dollars and cents. They don't talk about people and how they're affected by that percentage. They say: "We're just cutting by 1.8% or by 2%. It's not a big deal for those poor seniors, for example, to pay a 2% fee. It's not so bad to take 2% away from them." But it is bad. It's bad because it affects people.

This scheme here, the slot machines, is your job creation scheme. Mr Attorney General, this is your job creation scheme. Come on, it's laughable. Tragic tears. You are soiling this province. You're making it sick with your schemes. If that is all you have to offer, you might as well creep under the carpets like slithering serpents and disappear, because that's what you all are.

Then they talk about prevention and how they're going to put up millions to make sure their fine Tory friends don't gamble. They talk about prevention; it's laughable. They talk about enforcement; it is laughable once again. Do you actually believe that with all this money that they're going to make they're going to hire people to do enforcement? I don't believe that.

Mr Kormos: It's for the tax break for the rich.

Mr Marchese: It's for the tax break. That money has to be diverted for the tax break. It can't be used to hire enforcement officers, because they're cutting away in every imaginable ministry you can think of.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Rosario, tell us how you voted for video lottery terminals and casinos:

Mr Marchese: They're cutting enforcement officers in the Ministry of Labour. Do you think they're going to put money there?

Hon Mr Harnick: Gambling and VLTs.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Remind him of FSP, since he's here today.

Mr Marchese: Yes, the family plan. Please, Mr Harnick. You corrupted that; the Frankenstein of that horrible system is what it was.

This bill is designed to take money, bring it into the coffers to give it away to bank presidents. I love saying this: Bank presidents earn approximately \$1.6 million to \$1.9 million and they're going to get \$120,000 back, each one of them. This is where the tax credit is going to, this is where the tax break is going to, to support people like that. Are you a banker? Those of you who watch television, are you bankers?

The charities know this is not for them. They're going to take money away from charities and feed it to the government, the avaricious and voracious government that needs the money to give away the tax cut. It's for them. That's why they're introducing, in my view, not a very brilliant, not a very bright proposal here. This Bill 75 is a laughable, tragic bill. It's going to make this society sicker morally in this province. They'd better consult their friends, because I'm sure they don't support it.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Hastings: It's quite intriguing to listen to the member for Fort York ramble on about how the New Democrats are virtuosos of innocence or monopolists of morality when in fact it was the previous regime that brought in the Windsor casino. To note, I would just like to read into the record that the previous Premier of this province, Mr Rae, speaking on this whole thing back in 1993, had this to say: "The fact is, gambling is going on and much of it is" — imagine this, Mr Speaker — "illegal. The fact is as well that many charities are reliant now on a variety of bingos and other kinds of activities. Maybe we should be doing it in a different way." That's one thing that was said during the debate on the Windsor casino.

In reference to the whole item of the great McCarthyite mob allegation made by the member for Welland-Thorold, it is interesting to note, and I want to read into the record once again, this spoken by the previous Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations in August 1993. "Pick up the phone and call Premier Filmon of Manitoba. Tell him the three casinos his government owns are fronts for the mob. Tell Premier Bourassa" — bless the man's reputation — "that he is about to become some undercover ringleader," Churley commented to committee members in August of that year. She said also, "The mob has been driven out of the large casino operations completely and I have full confidence in the OPP and the police community." Quite a different version from what we heard over there today.

Mr Bradley: I want to compliment the member on his very unbiased and balanced speech on this subject this afternoon. I want to ask him if he has access to any information about who wrote a letter to the legislative committee, and this is an individual whose company manages more than 45 bingo halls and 150 charity

casinos in the province — recommending that urgent consideration be given to including VLTs in bingo halls if they are approved by the province. That's somewhat worrisome to me and I'll be asking you if you know anything about that, because the member for Welland-Thorold was very helpful in providing that kind of information about a person who apparently had been illegally involved in making representations to the committee to legalize VLTs.

1730

I also want to ask the member to comment on the fact that the placing of VLTs, or video slot machines, in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario — if that represents an escalation of the gambling that already exists. We know some exists; no use fighting those battles right now. But this represents a widespread escalation. Does he believe that by making it easier for people to have access to these machines somehow we will see an increase in gambling because people will simply have to leave the house and go down to the corner restaurant or bar, instead of having to travel to a controlled environment such as a casino — as much as everybody knows I don't like casinos, but at least they're a controlled environment. I'm wondering if the member would comment on that because I think he commented well on other issues, and on whether he thinks there is anything to do with the tax break associated with this, if perhaps the government needs this money because it's finding out with its tax break for the rich that somehow it needs more revenue to balance its budget?

Mr Kormos: I share, as you well know — you heard me earlier today, you've heard what I've had to say over the course of weeks and months about this — the concerns of Mr Bradley. Look, the fact is that this CISO report was kept under wraps. It was kept secret. The government refused to divulge its contents, even though it certainly could have, and now we know why: because the CISO report tells us, among other things, that parties to this campaign for video slots include one Lucio Sandrin, who is a director and shareholder of Cadith Entertainments Ltd. Another Cadith director, the same corporation, one Frank Di Maria — who's he? Cadith, which runs bingo parlours and charity casinos, says, "Go, go, hell-bent for election," wants this government to implement the slots. Why, we know that Frank Di Maria currently faces numerous racketeering and grand theft charges in Florida over alleged skimming of funds from charity bingos. We know that Lucio Sandrin was a prominent former member of an organized crime syndicate, the Paul Volpe family.

So here we are: Mobsters, crooks, thieves, organized crime are parties with this government in the advancement of video slot machines; the CISO report, which discloses this, kept secret by the government. Mr Hastings talks about morality. He's got a lot of nerve as a member of this government talking about morality. This government clearly is prepared to make deals with the devil. This government clearly is prepared to get into bed with the mob, is prepared to enter that world of corruption, that sinister world of organized crime, so that it can pay off on its promise for a tax break for the very rich.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I just want to point out some of the contradictions which we're seeming to get from the members of the third party. First of all, there seems to be quite a memory lapse concerning the lack of consideration that they had when they brought in the casinos. They seem to have forgotten that they had grandfathered further suppliers. Frankly, here they've exempted about 20,000 suppliers. They say, "Well, that's okay. We're not going to check you out, but yes, we're going to be tough on this stuff." What they're saying today makes no sense whatsoever.

Also, I might point out that back on October 22, when our colleague across the way, the member for Cochrane South, was speaking, he indicated, and this is in Hansard, "At this point, and let's be clear about this, in our communities across Ontario there's gambling that happens in the charitable gaming industry. That's when the Nevada dealer comes to our community and sets up a casino night at the Senator Hotel or the Ramada or wherever it might be in our community, and people go and gamble. That is a regulated business. But what happens is that the dollars raised through that, the profit made through gambling, goes directly back to our local communities to support different charitable organizations."

That's what the problem is here. These roving casinos which were introduced by the Peterson government, are totally unregulated. The charities have been saying all along that they're not getting their fair share out of these roving casinos because they are not regulated.

I can refer you to Eileen Moore of the Big Sisters of Peel, who says: "Monte Carlos fluctuate drastically, because we're gypsies. We are only allowed three-day events in and out of various venues. It's very difficult to gauge how things are going to be from one month to the next. We can't advertise effectively. Our players don't know where we're going to be next."

Many times these charities don't get the benefit of anything. That's what the problem is: non-regulation. Now, to be perfectly fair, side by side, bringing in this grandfathering of all these suppliers who were not checked out by the previous government — whose mess we're trying to clean up right now, by the way — they did bring in the Gaming Control Commission, which did bring in some controls. I'm sure they would agree with me that is the intent they had, although you seem to forget that they were trying to do some good at the time, I think. But once again it goes to the gist of what we're trying to do right now. What we're trying to do right now —

Mr Kormos: You are in their back pocket.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Excuse me, Mr Speaker. I claim a point of privilege here with the comment that the member for Welland-Thorold just yelled over at me.

Mr Kormos: Why would you cover up their involvement?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Mr Speaker, I don't believe that's parliamentary.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member for Welland-Thorold has indicated that a minister of the crown has been bought off by the

mob. He's been called by the Speaker on more than five or six occasions. I'd ask you to once again ask him to withdraw and apologize for those unfounded remarks.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I would ask the member for Welland-Thorold to withdraw those remarks.

Mr Kormos: Withdraw. Why did they try to cover up the fact that the mob was involved in submissions to the hearings? They tried to cover it up. They wouldn't release the CISO —

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): Throw him out. That is not a withdrawal.

Interjection: He withdrew.

Mr Turnbull: He did not. That is not a withdrawal.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The Chair accepts the unequivocal withdrawal of those remarks.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw it, but why did they cover up —

The Acting Speaker: There are two of us standing. One of us is out of order.

Mr Kormos: Why wouldn't you release the CISO report?

The Acting Speaker: When I'm standing, I'm supposed to be the only one that is. I'm sorry; that response is finished. I will give the member from High Park two minutes to respond.

Mr Marchese: I thank all the members who have spoken on this particular bill. First point: A number of speakers talked about the fact that we had introduced casinos. They say, as a result of that, why are we opposing this? There's a point here I want to make. If they believe, and I'm not sure they do, that having introduced a casino is a bad thing, why are they compounding the problem with these sophisticated slot machines? If they believe that is wrong, why add to the injustice and to the problem? But, you see, I don't believe they believe that. I believe they really accept what they're doing. I tell you, tragically, that it's going to be a problem.

I say this as well, in relation to what the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario said, that "The government has presented organized-crime groups with the vehicle for them to carry on with the job they know best." What does this tell you? I leave the audience to draw a conclusion with respect to what these experts have said and what the government has done with this information. You draw your conclusion about how the government informed itself about these comments, these experts who have commented on this particular issue and the problems that it causes. This is the problem that it causes: It will increase addiction, and we know that — they can deny it, but it will do that. It will increase petty crime. They can deny it but it will do that. It will cause greater family breakups and greater family breakdowns in society. This is what it will do. This is hardly a moral issue that they're dealing with here; this is an issue that is literally, I would say, immoral in terms of the effects that this bill will have on individuals, on families, on society in general, and I hope the communities will fight back.

1740

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Further debate?

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I rise today to support Bill 75 and I also want to —

Interjections.

Mr Rollins: Surprise, surprise. I don't support the whole thing at the present time. I think if you people would take five minutes and do some listening instead of yelling you might learn something. I think it's about time to do a little listening. You heard something on the weekend. I think the thing is that we did say we would bring it into racetracks. We did say we would put it into gaming halls. I think that's the direction that we're going to put it in.

You people would like us to believe, or tell the public to believe, that we would put it in every bar, but we also said —

Mr Bradley: Has the position changed?

Mr Rollins: No, but we said there are 20,000 machines. If there are 6,000 or 7,000 go into the race-tracks, if there are another 6,000 or 7,000 that go into the halls, how many machines do you think are left for all the other places?

Mr Kormos: One for every 550 population. Get the numbers.

Mr Rollins: You know what the numbers are. There are numbers —

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the member and I'm not having any difficulty hearing you. I think the member for member for Quinte has the floor.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm wondering if you can help me out with this; perhaps you can. I have detected from the speech that is being made that the government apparently is withdrawing part of the bill.

The Speaker: Order. The member for St Catharines, that's not even a point of interest, actually. The member for Quinte.

Mr Rollins: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We know that there are some black-market machines out there. There are some 20,000, so we've been told. We know we inherited most of those machines when Quebec legalized the VLT machines in Quebec, and they moved quickly into Ontario. It's nice for you people to sit over there and say, yes, it's very easy for the police to go in —

Mr Pouliot: It's a cancer, like a Pac-Man.

Mr Rollins: If you'll be quiet for a minute you might learn something. It won't be a lot, but it might be a little bit, surely.

Mr Pouliot: From you?

Mr Rollins: Yes, maybe.

The big thing of it is that those illegal machines that are out there, for the police to be able to make that charge, we've heard from the judge that you've got to have proof that there's been a payout —

Mr Bradley: The judge.

Mr Rollins: Yes, and I think that he put some different light on to this subject. I think that you people realize how hard it is for the police to get convictions.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): If it's about gambling, I'm prepared to listen to Guzzo.

Mr Rollins: Yes, that's right, and I think he's not far wrong, but some of your colleagues aren't doing that. But the thing of it is, if those police have to go in and spend a lot of dollars to remove an illegal machine, why do we

do that? By putting the gaming control together with the liquor licence control, those people then when they have that illegal machine, along with legal machines, they will be very easily removed.

Mr Kormos: How?

Mr Rollins: Because as long as it looks like a slot machine and does not have the Ontario stamp of approval on it, they'll not only lose their machine, they'll along with that —

Mr Kormos: That is the case now. The police have said they can't do it without resources. Why don't you read the reports from the police?

The Speaker: Order. The member for Welland-Thorold, I don't know if you've participated in this debate, but you will get your opportunity and I will ask for the same order when you speak that I ask now for the member for Quinte.

Mr Kormos: Where were you when I needed you?

The Speaker: Well, you did speak; then you must have gone on the record clearly. The member for Quinte.

Mr Martin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When my colleague here from Fort York was speaking, he was heckled to death; we could hardly hear him.

Mr Kormos: Well, not to death.

Mr Marchese: Not to death. An irritant. It was like an irritant on my back and nobody said anything.

The Speaker: Take your seats. That's not a point of order, for the member for Sault Ste Marie. I was not in the chair at the time. I'm sure the Chair did rule properly. I'm now ruling. Would you please come to order so the member for Quinte may continue his speech.

Mr Rollins: Thank you, Mr Speaker. One of the things this weekend, we had the pleasure of dialoguing with — and my colleague from Lake Nipigon was there too and listened to people from Alberta with some ideas that they had. When you people talk about the number of people who were addicted to gambling, the people from Alberta told us at that convention that approximately 4% of people were addicted to some form of gambling. However, according —

Mr Kormos: And with slots it's three times that.

Mr Rollins: Four per cent is what they say. Now they're from Alberta and maybe we can believe Alberta. They said also 1.4% of that was actually attributed to VLT machines.

Mr Kormos: Read the research: Montreal, Windsor, western Canada, Harvard University.

Mr Rollins: That's fine, but that's the story the people from Alberta told us. In Alberta, they also do not have large casinos. However, they have the same problem in Alberta with people leaving the casino in Alberta to go and play the casino in Saskatchewan. I know that here in Ontario we have a lot of people who leave our province, and have for years, to go gambling in Las Vegas, Atlantic City and those dollars are leaving our communities. Those dollars that are spent in Atlantic City by people out of Ontario, we don't get them back.

You were the government that decided we should have casinos, we should have slot machines. We're trying to bring in a regulation that we can control them. If we can control them and make them work, make them available to, yes, the people who are of age to be able to play,

they're not going to be made for minor places. They're not going in every bar. I can guarantee you we are not going to have enough machines to give every bar. I think those are the kinds of things this opposition over here would lead us to believe, that we would probably have 70,000 or 80,000 of these machines within weeks and that is not true. That's not the intent of this government.

We heard in the summer during the hearings that the people who had break-open tickets in Atlantic Canada were very worried in some of the areas that when the VLT machines would be put in, those things would take away from some of that break-open money. In Atlantic Canada that was not the case. It was not the case as found in Alberta where the break-open tickets did not take a big decline after the VLT machines were brought in. But I think that the break-open tickets are something that — where does that money go to? To charities. Where does the money go out of the profits that are hopefully in the VLT machines that we have? It will go back into charities. Some \$80 million more will go back into the charities. Is that not better than what they're getting now? I don't think charities are getting a penny out of those black-market machines that are out there, and they're out there in pretty good numbers.

Interjection.

Mr Rollins: Quebec? Yes, Quebec has just said one thing. The biggest thing that Quebec is in fear of is that we open up a casino in Ottawa, and if we opened up a casino in Ottawa, what will it do to the casino across in Hull? They know what it'll do, it'll hurt it in bad times and those are the kinds of things those people are very upset with. There's no question about it.

There are some areas where bingos have gone down, where the bingos have gone down because they are not offering a big enough prize for that certain area that they're offering it. They are going to put together a bingo that's province-wide so that hopefully they can increase the amount of the takes and give out a bigger prize so they can encourage a few more people to come.

When we hear what the opposition has said they aren't in favour of, that we're going to get addicted to these machines, I think as a government we've got to be very careful that we don't become addicted to the kind of dollars that are coming in out of the lottery machines. We've got to control them and make sure that we as a government run them. We cannot allow the black market or the underground, as they say, to have any influence on that machine whatsoever. We've got to control that ourselves.

Bob Rae, even as long ago as March 24, 1992, said that the fact that gambling is going on and as much of it is illegal, that we should be part of it. Maybe it's well time that the charities and the governments decided to change things and make this right.

1750

Mr Baird: Your leader said this, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Do you agree with Bob or not?

Mr Rollins: Yes, we give it to Bob. Maybe we should do — we did in 1992. We did what he said in 1992. We said we'd better do it a different way.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The members for Welland-Thorold and Nepean, please come to order.

Mr Rollins: Mr Speaker, I had the privilege of listening to the gentleman from Welland-Thorold one night here until midnight because he rambled on and on and on, and then he took a holiday. I was sure that after that holiday he would have come back with a different view, but believe me, he hasn't. He hasn't changed his mind one darned little bit. Well, he'll listen. He'll listen some time. Mr Crozier even agrees that gambling has been out of order for a long time. We've done it haphazardly. He even said in August, quoted in the paper, that yes, the three governments have been really ad hoc at this idea of gambling. However, we must tighten up the control, and hopefully Bill 75 will tighten that up.

Mr Crozier: Some parts of it.

Mr Rollins: That's only part of it. I know that's only part of it. But I think Mr Kennedy and his gaming halls, there again, the charity gaming halls are not something that he wants to stand up and support very large. However, he does quote it in here as it could be harmful to society. I take it that smoking is harmful to society. There are a lot of other things that are harmful to society. But I don't think we're going to do that. The people who want to reach in their pocket and put a dollar bill or a toonie in the machine, that's their choice.

I know there's a gentleman on the other side, and I don't know why we should worry too much about what he has to say other than he has used me awful good all summer and thought that he would like a few minutes to discuss a few things. I think the big thing of it is, we need to take it slow and easy and make sure these machines are put in the right place. Believe me, we can make it happen, but don't listen to all the pitfalls that there are. Thank you very much for your attention.

The Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: I thought I detected a change in government policy. What happens sometimes, people out there should know, is that when the government feels the heat, sometimes a note comes in from the Premier's office: "Perhaps somebody could float this idea that we're really not going to put them into bars and restaurants" — as I always say, every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario — "but in fact now we're going to move slowly," and perhaps, the implication is, they'll never end up in any bars and restaurants.

Make no mistake about it: I respect the member's approach to this as being better than many of his colleagues, but I'm going to tell you, the Premier of this province wants that money. You see, he has given a tax cut that benefits the richest people in this province the most, and as a result now he has to borrow money to give the tax cut. He doesn't want to have to borrow that money, so he figures if you tax the most vulnerable people, the most desperate people, those who are addicted to gambling, the most alluring kind of gambling, that being video slot machines or video lottery terminals, somehow he'll get this money in the coffers and he won't have to borrow as much as we told him he was going to have to borrow.

So I think there's some hope. I want to say I think there's some hope in the member's approach, and at the House leaders' meeting tomorrow I will make some suggestions or I might speak to the House leader about

how we might modify this bill to gain greater acceptance from all members of this House. I want to say the member is right when he starts to express doubts about certain aspects of this bill. It's good to see one of them. Obviously you're not looking for a seat in the cabinet, because the ones who are just say what the Premier wants to hear. When certain members get up, you know what the Premier's thinking. He's thinking this because they get up and say it. So I want to compliment the member. He's showing some hope to those of us in the opposition. Good job.

Mr Pouliot: They still don't get it. To have us believe that the money extracted from those insatiable machines will be channelled to charity — before that takes place, I will be the emperor of China. This will not happen.

Listen to the truth. At committee, the opposition suggested that 10% of the proceeds, 10% of the take, go back to charity. They wanted to put it right in the bill. The Progressive Conservatives, the government, said: "Oh, no." Like plague, cholera, typhus: "Get away from me. We won't put it in the bill." When the opposition came back and said, "No proximity to schools," so the little ones would not be seduced by the crack cocaine of gambling; "get away from the neighbourhood, say no," they voted it down again.

When we said, "Put a certain percentage, a few dollars, back into rehab because some people get addicted to the crack cocaine of gambling and they need help," they said, "No, the money will go into the general fund." What happens when the money goes into a vortex, into that quagmire? The toxicity level gets so high that it's difficult to approach the vortex to extract back any money to filter through charitable organizations. They're not fooling anyone. They are conjurers of illusion who will stop at nothing. If they had their way I suspect there would be in the chamber one of those young pages who are serving us, with all the bells and whistles, to extract the \$10 or \$15 per day that they make.

Mr Baird: I listened very carefully to the speech by the member for Quinte and to the response by the member opposite. He didn't mention his Premier and the member for Welland-Thorold's Premier, their leader for many years, when he said: "The first one is that I don't see any gambling mania in this province," and I would agree with Bob Rae when he said that on April 28, 1994. "But there are a lot of people who enjoy gaming from time to time and who enjoy betting from time to time." He didn't mention his government's plan.

I think the member for Lake Nipigon served with great distinction in the cabinet of the New Democratic government and Mr Rae. What was the policy of that government? That's the policy not just of Bob Rae but of the entire government, the group of them, and it was as follows, articulated by the minister and spokesperson for the government. She said:

"When we announced that there would be a point project, a casino in Windsor, we said at that time that there would be VLTs in the casino itself in Windsor, and that is the policy of the government."

That's a policy that I know all members opposite supported when they got up and voted for the casino project in Windsor. The plan was to put VLTs in casinos

and they supported that plan. Not one member, save the member for Welland-Thorold, got up and voted against that because they agreed with it at the time. I know they would never get up and vote for something they didn't agree with.

The member for Quinte didn't mention a quote from the general manager of the Fort Erie Race Track in the St Catharines Standard that the introduction of VLTs would keep the track open and save existing jobs as well as creating new employment, saying, "This is a window of opportunity we've never, never seen before"; he didn't mention the support of the Ontario Restaurant Association, which believes this is an important initiative towards combating the underground economy.

Mr Crozier: I welcome the opportunity to have a few comments on the remarks made by the member for Quinte. He was absolutely right, when he referred to my remarks, in saying that over three governments the introduction of gambling and various kinds of gambling, ending up now with these insidious little slot machines, has been done on an ad hoc basis. I agree with him. But when I've said it should be tightened up, very clearly the police said, "You give us the resources and we'll go after those illegal machines."

Right now we know that those machines out there are possibly illegal and you can identify them and go after them. Once these machines are spread across the province, and I asked the question earlier today, how could you tell the difference between an illegal machine, a legal machine or, as the Premier said, a simulated machine? I have absolutely no idea what a simulated VLT is. But once they're made legal you walk into a bar and there won't be any way to tell. Believe me, the illegal forces in this province will find a way to have them disguised as legal machines.

We have to look at Bill 75 as enabling legislation. Bill 75 doesn't say they're going into racetracks; it doesn't say they're going into a controlled environment. It enables us to put out VLTs anywhere. And that's our concern, is how many will go into restaurants and bars. Once they're out there, there will be a great deal of pressure, I suspect, from restaurant and bar owners to spread them across this province.

Anyway, in closing — gee, I'm enjoying this debate so much that I'd be quite willing to ask for unanimous consent so that we could go by 6 o'clock and discuss this and give the member for High Park-Swansea an opportunity to give us his opinion on them.

The Speaker: Responses from the member for Quinte.

Mr Rollins: I think the big thing with these machines that we heard in our hearings this summer — and I know

that some of you gentlemen were on those hearings — is that there is some support out there to go into some bars, there is some support to go into the racetrack, there's some support to go into some areas that are definitely restricted. I don't think we ever heard anything about going next to schools. I think that was absolutely wrong. I was there on those hearings and I did not hear that.

Ms Martel: Why did the government go against that amendment then?

Mr Rollins: Well, the thing of it is that there's also money spent in that — 2% of that money is to go towards problem gambling. I think that this government has realized that.

Ms Martel: That amendment was brought into committee and you voted against it.

Mr Rollins: Well, it was brought in that there was to be an amount go —

The Speaker: Member for Quinte, address your remarks to the Chair.

Mr Rollins: I guess it's better talking to you because they don't want to listen. Thanks for you taking your time to listen.

The big thing of it is that I think time and time again on that committee we had a lot of people supporting the idea of bringing those machines in and to make sure that they were under a controlled environment.

Ms Martel: You forget what happened in committee. You guys voted that down.

The Speaker: The member for Sudbury East, please.

Mr Rollins: When those machines are brought in and when this law is legal, that will make other machines illegal. If they do not have the stamp of the approval of the province of Ontario, they will become illegal and they will be confiscated. When they're confiscated, their liquor licence at the same time will go with them. So those people have something more invested than just that. They probably have their income invested. Their selling of food and their selling of liquor will be removed. Those kind of people will not allow the illegal machines. It didn't happen in Alberta and it hasn't happened in other jurisdictions.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Essex South had a good suggestion. I'm prepared to give unanimous consent to sit till 6:45 so the member for High Park-Swansea, my good friend, can speak on this issue.

The Speaker: Do we have consent to sit until 6:45 so the member for High Park-Swansea can get on the record? I hear no.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1803.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
114	4813	2	41	Mr Kormos: Bill Murdoch is my friend. He shows a

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Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
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Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
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Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 October 1996

Mardi 29 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): TVO provides quality programming to northwestern Ontario and is essential as a service provider in the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation region.

Because of this government's actions, the Wawatay radio network will not operate today in protest of the government's plan to privatize TVOntario. Since 1984, TVO has carried the Wawatay radio network on its satellite video signal. This partnership provided Wawatay with an economical means of providing a native-language network radio service across the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. Distribution of Wawatay's broadcast signal will not be viable without the assistance of TVO. First nation communities in the northwest are concerned that the sale of TVO would more than likely lead to the elimination of Wawatay's native-language broadcast services.

Wahsa distance education, which is also distributed through the TVO system, will also be jeopardized if privatization by the Harris government proceeds. Wahsa provides an opportunity to students in 23 first nations to complete their high school education without the expense and emotional stress of leaving their homes and families. The services that are provided in northwestern Ontario and to the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation by TVO are unique and essential to the healthy development and future of our region.

Because of the minister's actions, the airwaves of Wawatay radio network will be silenced today to show what can be expected if the government continues with its privatization plans. Minister, your decision to sell Ontario's network will result in the elimination of first nation language services for 35 northern first nation communities.

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I think it's time the Minister of Education and Training exercised his primary role as an advocate and proponent of our education system. The minister appears to be unaware of the high quality of education in Ontario. Our quality education system is being threatened for political and financial reasons as a result of this.

It's time the provincial government recognized the high quality of education presently offered to students in Ontario and refrained from further unsubstantiated derogatory comments on the provincial education system.

We must recognize the serious impact on students of further funding reductions to education. Cuts hurt kids.

Parents and ratepayers support and value local governance of their education system, and it's not just they who feel this way. The Minister of Finance stated in June 1996, "School boards are accountable to their community and the government is confident that they are in the best position to determine the priorities of their constituents."

I hope the minister will also acknowledge the value of locally elected school boards as advocates and representatives of local communities.

It's time the Minister of Education entered into realistic and meaningful consultation with all —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

LUPUS DISEASE

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Inflammation of the joints, heart disease, kidney disease, facial rash, memory loss: The list of symptoms is long and frightening. This disease can affect any organ or system in the body and can affect any man, woman or child, and there is no cure.

October is Lupus Awareness Month, the disease of a thousand faces. Lupus is a disease in which the immune system loses its ability to tell the difference between foreign substances and its own cells and tissue.

More people have lupus than AIDS, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, sickle-cell anaemia and cystic fibrosis combined. Data show that between 1.4 and two million people have been diagnosed with lupus.

For the vast majority of people with lupus, effective treatment can minimize symptoms, reduce inflammation and maintain normal bodily functions. New research brings unexpected findings each year. The progress made in treatment and diagnosis during the last decade has been greater than that made over the last 100 years.

With hard work, determination and a little luck, I am confident a cure can soon be found.

RHONA MICKELSON

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): On October 22 the disabled community lost a very special friend. Rhona Mickelson, founder of Star Tracks Performing Arts Centre and Talent Agency for the Disabled, passed away from heart failure.

At the age of three, Miss Mickelson was playing with her dolls when an improperly constructed patio roof gave way at the family home at San Antonio, Texas, caving in on her. The resulting spinal injury left her a paraplegic and required the use of a wheelchair.

In university, she noticed during film studies that able-bodied actors were used to play the roles of people with disabilities; thus the idea for a talent agency for the

disabled was born. Her efforts opened doors for people with disabilities in the world of film, advertising and employment. She found work for people with disabilities as models, in magazines, films and commercials. Rhona Mickelson lived on a disability pension and supported Star Tracks out of her own pocket.

Rhona was a personal friend who was always there for me, with a smile, with a laugh, with optimism abounding.

Whatever damage was caused from the accident, the spirit of a remarkable woman survived. There are examples of courage everywhere, from the tenacious desire of Terry Fox to the determined perseverance and courage of Rick Hansen. Rhona Mickelson personified all that and more. Her unfailing spirit and selfless concern for others is a remarkable legacy that will never be forgotten.

Rhona, you are among the leaves, the trees — you will always be among us.

Our deepest sympathies go out to her sister, Penny, brother, Stephen, and father, Harry.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Earlier today I attended a press conference which called attention to the lack of action by the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services with respect to allegations of abuse against youth in correctional facilities, and in particular the death of James Lonnee at the hands of another youth while both were locked in a single segregation cell at Wellington Detention Centre.

Many citizens in the province are outraged by the lack of action by the minister and they are fearful that youth who are incarcerated may continue to experience the kind of abuse and mistreatment which has been alleged in a statement of claim against the minister by a number of these youths.

1340

A campaign has begun to bring the attention of Ontario citizens to the seriousness of this issue. The treatment of youths who are in custody, who are at the mercy of the correctional system and those who run it, should be of great importance to all of us. How do we expect youthful offenders to accept responsibility for their actions and change their behaviour when they experience abuse and degradation at the hands of those who are supposed to care for them and teach them other ways to behave? How can we expect parents and members of the community to support law enforcement agencies when such allegations are made and the minister accepts no responsibility for either those under his authority or those under his care?

You will see that many of us are wearing black ribbons today. These ribbons are in memory of James Lonnee and all youth who have suffered abuse and mistreatment within the correctional services. They remind us of our responsibility as citizens to ensure that the rights of those who are incarcerated by the province are protected by the province.

EDUCATIONAL DONATIONS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): Doing more for less. That's what we're all trying to do, at home and here in government.

The Scarborough Board of Education has heeded our call on behalf of Scarborough taxpayers. The Scarborough board negotiated nearly \$4 million in private sector donations so that every student in Scarborough will soon be surfing on a state-of-the-art, high-speed interactive wide area network. I am told by school board officials it is the largest donation ever made to a public school board in North America.

Scarborough educators realize how important it is for our young people to have access to the technology leading us into the 21st century and beyond.

Silicon Graphics Canada, a world leader in computer technology, will provide equipment, licensed software and expert support valued at \$3 million. Shaw Communications contributed \$750,000 to provide high-speed fibre optic cable to eight schools, with every other school in the city of Scarborough linked to these sites. The University of Toronto will provide access to some of its information technology services and donate \$100,000 to partner with a Scarborough elementary and secondary school. In the spirit of cooperation, Scarborough will share its technology with at least 23 other boards across the province.

The Scarborough board should be commended for being able to do more with less. They are looking to the future with optimism, showing us how limitless are the possibilities when we all work together for the taxpayer and for the kids.

AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to inform the House that on Wednesday, October 30, the Kent County Agricultural Hall of Fame Association will hold its eighth annual induction ceremony. The Kent County Agricultural Hall of Fame is the first of its kind to recognize the achievements and services of both men and women within the realm of agriculture. This year, five new members will take their place of honour in the hall of fame.

Helen Coatsworth has kept west Kent and wider readership informed for more than half a century, has been a long-time member and office holder of the Women's Institute, and at age 89 years is still writing weekly columns for the Wheatley Journal.

Ed Chinnick has been involved in many facets of agricultural development, including his key role in the formative years of the Western Ontario Breeders Association.

Paul King has had an impact on agriculture locally, nationally and internationally, including service as president of the International Seed Trade Federation.

Lewis Sherman dedicated his life to the betterment of agriculture, including the Ontario Farm Products Appeal Tribunal.

John E. Smith was responsible for many innovative ideas beneficial to the fruit production and marketing industry.

All of the achievements of these unselfish people are too numerous to mention but have had a tremendous effect within the realm of agriculture and rural communities within and beyond the borders of Kent county.

JOHN GREYSON

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): John Greyson is a Toronto filmmaker whose film *Lilies* — certainly controversial but highly acclaimed, nominated for some 14 Gemini's — opened on Friday night at the Carlton Cinemas. Of course, Mr Greyson was there, as is to be expected, and of course he spoke, introducing his film.

Well, it was a scenario that could have been scripted by Kafka or Huxley, because in Mike Harris's brave new world what did John Greyson, this acclaimed filmmaker-director, get for introducing his film and for noting that it was one of the last films to be funded by the Ontario Film Development Corp, a fund now gutted by Mike Harris's Tories, and calling upon people in the audience to let their displeasure and concern about that be known the next day on Saturday during the Days of Action here in Toronto? John Greyson found himself arrested by two of Metro's finest for trespassing, at the behest of the ownership and management of Carlton Cinemas.

This is bizarre. This is an incredible infringement upon the rights of a cultural spokesperson to speak out as we expect them to. It's something about which I expect the Minister of Culture, if we dare call her that, would express outrage. I call upon the Attorney General to ensure that those frivolous, absurd, illegal charges of trespassing are at the very least stayed, and preferably withdrawn, by his crown attorney.

HAROLD SYME

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Canadians are known across the world for their deep respect of the democratic process. In my riding is a constituent I know all members of this House will appreciate, as he has demonstrated his commitment to democracy for over 50 years. Mr Harold Syme, now in his 80s, has worked hard as a volunteer for a great many candidates in his lifetime. He has chosen candidates who best represent his values. Individuals such as Clifford Case, Lex MacKenzie and John MacBeth have benefited from his guidance and hard work.

Today, as a senior, Harold is concerned about the state of this province and the generations who will succeed him. As a result, he has again chosen a direction that best represents his values. He wants a sensible approach to getting this province back into shape while continuing to ensure the most vulnerable members of society have access to essential services. The approach he backs is the approach taken by this government.

Harold was recognized by the Premier this weekend for his dedication towards making Ontario a better place to live. As a beneficiary of his assistance, I too express my appreciation to Harold Syme for his contribution to this province and this country, and for his support of this government.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to introduce to the members of the Legislative Assembly, in the Speaker's gallery today, Mr Liam Jewell, who was a participant in the 1996 Olympic games in kayaking. Welcome.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: It's really odd that this place is so hot before question period has even started. Surely we could do something about the heat so that it's not cold one day and too hot the next. It's time you started moderating the place around here.

The Speaker: That's not a point of privilege, actually. It may be a point of whining; I'm not sure.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Wait a minute. When he complimented you it was a point of privilege.

The Speaker: That was a point of privilege, that's right. Actually, we've opened the windows. That's the best we can do.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): In the absence of the Minister of Transportation and the Premier, my question is for someone who knows something about unsafe trucks, the Deputy Premier. This government's record on truck safety is a disgrace. Four out of five Ontarians are scared to drive on our highways, as they should be; 95% of Ontarians still feel that trucks are unsafe on our highways. Your government has been in power now for 18 months. Can you tell me why there are more than 100 persistent violators — trucking companies — still on the road today, 18 months after you've taken office?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I have a potential conflict with respect to this question and would refer this question to the Chair of Management Board. I presume the honourable member knew that. Thank you very much for the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): You can't answer and refer.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine is right. He didn't answer. He referred the question because he said he had a conflict.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): This is a topic of concern to the minister and this particular government because obviously there have been safety concerns, there have been unfortunate accidents, unfortunate incidents over the past many years, frankly, and it's about time somebody came to grips with this. Indeed, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Transportation introduced legislation to raise the fine for vehicles, and I believe this increase in minimum fines will have some impact. Having said that, I know the Minister of Transportation is still studying this issue, looking at more effective means to address the concerns on our roads.

1350

Mr Gerretsen: The OPP constable, who is a member of the Truck Troopers, stated this morning in the media: "These new fines are going to be insignificant. We don't think \$400 is much of a deterrent for companies."

Back in February the Minister of Transportation promised to bring in demerit points for drivers of unsafe trucks and tough new fines within three months at the very latest. That's what he stated. Yesterday, nine months later, in addition to weak new fines, as they have already been described by the constable involved, the minister told us to be patient with demerit points.

Minister, in those nine months people have died. When is your government going to take real action, instead of bogus photo ops and public relations exercises, to get the unsafe trucks off the road?

Hon David Johnson: I just remind you of real action this government has taken: Ontario now has the highest minimum fines for safety-related offences, such as defective brakes at \$400 here in Ontario — only \$300 in Quebec; mandatory training for wheel installers; higher maximum fines of up to \$20,000; air brake training for truck drivers; 35 more enforcement officers have been put into place across Ontario.

Finally, over seven years, which go back to the previous NDP government and to the Liberal government before that, overloaded gravel trucks were permitted to drive on our highways, and the minister has now lifted the axle weight moratorium to prevent that from happening. There is a specific piece of action taken by this government not taken by the two previous governments.

Mr Gerretsen: The public is demanding real action. A coroner's inquest held more than a year ago made 31 recommendations that they felt could save lives and prevent more tragedies. Minister, can you tell this House how many of the 31 recommendations actually have been followed? When are you going to change the practice whereby mechanics of trucking companies can give safety certificates to their own fleets? When will you institute automatic suspensions like we have for other driving offences?

Hon David Johnson: I will simply reiterate that in my capacity as Chair of Management Board this government has taken the issue seriously. We are most concerned about safety on our streets and have implemented all the activities I mentioned previously. The Minister of Transportation is studying further means. I believe there will be further legislation coming forward. I tell you again that this government takes the issue seriously. I look forward to further action in this regard.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. I have in my hand a copy of the statement of claim that was issued by 12 young offenders who are suing you and your government for the treatment they received at Bluewater and the Elgin-Middlesex centres. This document contains some very shocking allegations about the way your government treats children in its care.

Apparently ministry staff manipulated these youngsters by inciting them to riot. After the riot they shackled the children outside in the cold for hours without proper clothing. It seems that some 40 young persons were handcuffed behind their backs, shackled and then taken to the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, where they

were forced to run a gauntlet of guards armed with batons. They were beaten, stripped, left naked in cells for hours, denied medical attention and forbidden to shower for days. One youngster was kicked in the head until he was unconscious.

Minister, these are the children we're talking about, children in your care, children whose safety and security depended on you and your officials. You are ultimately responsible for everything that happens in your ministry. What is your explanation?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The member asking the question is a lawyer. He is well aware that these are unproved allegations and we will be submitting a statement of defence.

Mr Gerretsen: We're talking here about kids who were stripped naked and beaten by ministry staff. This sounds like something out of Amnesty International, yet for months you've been refusing to comment on these disturbing events, supposedly from fear of jeopardizing the ongoing investigations. You have squelched a report by the child advocate about the ill treatment of these children. On a personal level, I find your apparent lack of concern for these children very troubling. Even if only half of these allegations are true, that would be extremely serious indeed — allegations of torture, beatings, cruel and inhumane treatment, allegations of blatant disregard of these youngsters' human rights and dignity and the use of excessive force.

In light of these serious allegations, I ask you to stand in your place and commit to ensuring that these investigations are wound up quickly and to holding a public inquiry immediately so that we can get to the truth. Will you commit today to holding a public inquiry as soon as the investigations are over?

Hon Mr Runciman: I indicated when this issue was initially raised that we had to await the outcome of the police investigation. That's a question that should be posed to Chief Fantino in the city of London, whose force is conducting that investigation. The parallel internal ministry investigation will be completed I think within a short time frame following completion of the police investigation. They are trying to do them as individuals are interviewed and the police indicate they will no longer have contact with that person, and the ministry can go in and conduct an interview and pursue that particular avenue.

I am as frustrated as anyone. I have indicated that in terms of seeing a completion of this, but this is a police investigation and I am not about to direct the police with respect to how they conduct an investigation. I should point out, Mr Speaker, if you give me another moment, that I understand the London police have dedicated a significant number of officers in an attempt to expedite this matter.

Mr Gerretsen: We know that parents of some of the children in your custody are calling your office frantically — we've heard about that earlier — fearing for their own children's safety. We know that the office of the child advocate has been making these allegations known to your office for months. We also know that James Lonnee, one of the shackled children transferred to

the Elgin-Middlesex centre, actually died in jail, murdered under the supposedly watchful eye of one of your staff.

Minister, your avoidance of giving us clear answers on this issue can no longer be tolerated in light of these public allegations. Will you commit to holding a public inquiry on these disturbing events and finally to taking responsibility for the tragedies that took place?

Hon Mr Runciman: I want to dispute the member's comments with respect to the child advocate. In fact, we have a letter from the child advocate, who indicates that she is pleased with the response the ministry has made in terms of immediate and long-term strategies to address recommendations outlined in her report. I think we're moving as expeditiously as possible on a whole range of fronts related to the young offenders system and the corrections system as a whole. I think we're doing this in a very appropriate and responsible way.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is also to the Solicitor General. That interpretation of the child advocate's comments is a — I can't say anything else, but it misrepresents what she was talking about, what she was referring to. It has nothing to do with the activities that flowed from Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, James Lonnee — and I can go on — Vanier, Metro West Detention Centre.

My colleagues and I have been raising these issues with you. We wear black ribbons today in memory of James Lonnee and of the children who were abused while in custodial care in your ministry. You have on every occasion stonewalled answering questions; you've deflected questions; you have hidden behind the veil of investigation after investigation. There are more investigations going on in your ministry now than I can even count. Minister, you've got to break through this, because we heard today that the youth who are no longer in custody fear for the safety of those remaining Bluewater and Elgin-Middlesex youth who are still in custody. Further than that, parents are worried about their children who are in your care.

Minister, when will these investigations be completed? When will you make public all of the details? We cannot continue to have you stonewall with respect to these important issues of custody of children.

1400

Hon Mr Runciman: There have been a number of investigations; there's no doubt about that. But I think that many of these are going to bear fruit in a very positive sense with respect to the future of the corrections system both on the youth side and the adult side.

I have just today received a report from Norman Inkster, the former head of the RCMP, who conducted an internal review of the management and accountability procedures within the ministry. I have not had the opportunity yet to review Mr Inkster's recommendations, although I think generally they are favourable in terms of the initiatives we are undertaking. I intend, as promised, to release that report publicly, hopefully this week.

Ms Lankin: According to the coroner's office, James Lonnee was the first youth who has ever been murdered in a correctional facility. This is serious and of an import

beyond any of the partisan to and fro that takes place in this House. Parents are worried about their children who are in custodial care of your ministry, and the public is concerned about what's going on in our institutions.

The statement of claim today claims that these youth suffered violations of their constitutional rights under sections 7 and 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were all violated. All of those are international covenants in force in Canada.

I've seen the spectacle of you standing here in your place answering questions and rewriting ministry policies. Minister, we have to have a full, clear airing of all of these issues. There has to be a public inquiry and public review of the steps you've taken before parents and the public can be satisfied. Will you agree to that?

Hon Mr Runciman: I remind the member that there is a mandatory inquest with respect to a death in custody, and that will occur. We have undertaken a number of initiatives with respect to recommendations that were made to the previous government in terms of improving training and hiring processes for correctional officers. We have already instituted those, which will give significantly more input in terms of training when individuals go into the adult stream or the young offender stream, that kind of training which was missing and was pointed out by Judge Inger Hansen when she looked at the whole question of Bell Cairn.

We have also issued an RFP to take a look at the corrections culture and human resources challenges which we know have been there for many, many years, systemic problems which past governments failed to come to grips with.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, this is an issue of your ministerial responsibility and, frankly, your ministerial incompetence. In this whole sad saga, all you've done is try to blame previous governments for events which occurred during your tenure of office.

You've set in motion numerous investigations, none of which has resulted in any action except the charging of young offenders with mischief. You've not released the child advocate's report. Your internal investigation isn't complete; you keep extending its time period. No senior officials in your ministry have been disciplined as a result of your not being informed about the allegations of abuse at Elgin-Middlesex. Now you're being sued by the managers who were the subject of those allegations because of your inaction. You're being sued by the youth who allege mistreatment within your facilities. Frankly, increasingly you're being seen by the parents and the rest of the population as being both unable and unwilling to take these matters seriously.

Your announcements concerning the hiring and training of corrections officers mean nothing when you've also announced that you're going to get rid of 1,200 jobs in correctional services. Who is going to get hired and trained?

You are the minister. When are you going to accept responsibility for what's happening in your ministry and

the safety of youth who are in the custody and care of you as the minister?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think I've already answered the question.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. Yesterday in the media the Minister of Education was blaming school boards and teachers for his cuts to education. I want to ask the Minister of Education a question about a particular board: the Lakehead Board of Education.

The Lakehead Board of Education did not increase property taxes even though you cut their budget significantly. As a result of your cuts they made a decision to reduce their special education classes by 50%, and one mother, Beverly Rizzi, told us her daughter is in a grade 8 class with 41 students.

I would like to know what you think the Lakehead Board of Education should have done differently. They're your cuts. You're the one taking the money away. Where would you have made the cuts? What decisions would you have made differently?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the leader of the third party for the question. I could make a couple of suggestions that have been made to our government on where reductions might be found outside the classroom. For instance, I would refer them to the Sweeney report, which your government asked for, that said 47% of expenditures in our system happen outside the classroom. I might refer them to submissions that were made to us by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association last year which looked at various areas where up to \$1 billion could be reduced from our spending without hurting the classroom. I'd ask them to have a look at what reductions might be made from some instruments we provided for school boards last year to make reductions, some of those being in school administration and other areas. That's what I would suggest to the board.

Mr Hampton: This is more of the same. Everyone in Ontario recognizes that this government is cutting education and affecting students in the classroom except the Minister of Education. He's more interested in spin-doctoring than in education.

Let me try again. You say that school board trustees, elected by the same people as you — they're locally, democratically elected — are not cutting properly. Let me use the example of Tilbury District High School, operated by the Kent County Board of Education. A young woman named Kim Wright went back to her high school this past week and found that instead of two guidance counsellors there is now one, and that guidance counsellor is hard pressed to deal with all the kids who need her help; classes and grades have been doubled up; when a teacher is sick, the class is cancelled instead of a supply teacher being brought in; and students are afraid they will have to go to another high school to get their classes.

Minister, you owe it to people. They're your cuts. You're the one taking money out of education to finance your phoney tax scheme. How would you have cut

differently? You owe it to those boards of education. How would you have done it differently at Tilbury?

Hon Mr Snobelen: We had a report from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association last year which indicated there were reductions available, which they recommended, that would total up to \$1 billion. Of course our reduction last year on the operating side amounted to \$233 million, about a 1.8% reduction. I believe those reductions can be made without affecting classroom size, the quality of education or the way it's delivered in the province.

Our government is very clear about the fact that we will have a more accountable and a higher-quality system of education, and most important, a more affordable one. Unlike the leader of the third party's government for five years, we are unwilling to send the children of Ontario a bill for their own education by raising the debt of the province.

Mr Hampton: Again I ask the minister to answer a specific question. I've given him examples from two boards of education and all I've gotten back is more spin-doctoring.

Since you've become the Minister of Education these are the things that have been cut in school systems. Libraries and resource centres have been cut because obviously you don't think they're important. Custodial services have been cut. Transportation has been cut. Lunchroom supervisors have been cut. Teachers' preparation time has been cut. And that's all coming out of children and their classrooms. Special education has been cut.

1410

You had on Saturday literally tens of thousands of people here in the streets of Toronto opposing your education agenda. So I think you owe it to people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Government members, come to order.

Mr Hampton: You're the one who's taking the money out of the —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Would the government members please come to order. I have great difficulty hearing the question.

Mr Hampton: You're the one who took \$800 million out of education last year. You're the one who's proposing to take \$600 million out of education this year. Where would you cut? You owe it to these boards to give them a hand. Where would you make the cutting decisions?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to be very clear about this. This government said to the people of Ontario, and has acted on that commitment to the people of Ontario, that we would have a system that was more affordable, that we would find savings inside of our education system that did not affect the classroom, and those savings are available. They're available and they've been pointed out to the previous government that they're available in countless studies that point to the waste outside of the classroom.

Let me give you one quote: "What the Metropolitan Toronto School Board needs to take a look at is how

much money is going into administrative resources in school boards that don't even run schools. Maybe that's what should be looked at in this community, to save money and provide more resources to the kids in the classroom." If you're wondering who that's a quote from, it's from the previous Minister of Education, a member of your government, sir.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is likewise to the Minister of Education. I'd like to read you a quote: "Not only have there been some instances where classroom education may have been affected and should not have been, but there have also been tax increases at the local level that are not acceptable to this government." Do you know who said that, Minister? You did. You finally admitted that kids are affected in the classroom, that students indeed are paying the price. For 17 months you said you had a plan to protect the students from your cuts. Minister, tell me today what you're going to do now that you've admitted that your cuts are hurting students.

Hon Mr Snobelen: To the honourable member opposite, I want to thank him for the question. I'm sure he'd understand if I enjoyed the quote from the member for Windsor-Riverside more than the quote he just read, but that's the case.

This government takes very seriously any reductions in our system that affect the quality of education. We have doubled our investment in information technology in the classroom. We have a course instituted at the EQAO which will be measuring quality across the province. We now have a College of Teachers. We have taken a variety of initiatives over the course of the last 15 months specifically to improve the quality of education, the measurable difference in quality of education across the province. Anything that affects classroom education is unacceptable to this government and we will take the actions necessary to make sure that does not happen.

Mr Patten: Minister, you haven't addressed the adverse way in which people are reporting back how students are affected. You have no problem announcing cuts, you have no problem taking \$1 billion perhaps out of education totally and you have no problem obviously in creating a crisis.

Minister, tell me, what are you going to do about the students at Nottawa Central school in Collingwood? This school has no wheelchair ramps, no cafeteria, no gym, no money for repairs. The hallways barely meet the fire code for width. Kindergarten students are forced to share washrooms with senior students and there are more students in portables than there are in this crumbling school. What are you going to say to these students? What are you going to say to the parents of these kids? We hear that more money is coming out. How are you going to protect those kids in the classroom?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously our government is very concerned with classroom education. We are monitoring the response of school boards across the province to what was a very modest reduction in operating costs last year — about 1.8%. We believe quite clearly that there is evidence those reductions can be made without affecting classroom education. Of course, we are monitoring

those situations and we intend to take the action on both the funding side and on the governance side that is required to make sure every child in Ontario has the opportunity for a quality education. We will do that. Previous governments have failed to do that.

Specifically regarding your question, I believe it's somewhat ironic you would ask that question today inasmuch as we are reviewing and will be bringing out a program that will have a quality of schooling across the province that is not matched, in this decade certainly. We are looking at innovative ways to make sure we have the classroom structures we need going on to the next millennium. The reason I find it so ironic is that your government, and their government, sat idle on the issue of capital funding while 8,000 portables were brought into our system over the last decade.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Attorney General. A group of 35 people assembled in Waterloo last night to fight the changes you made to the family support plan. Once again it was confirmed that you haven't fixed the problems, that you've created new problems.

For instance, Susan Harris said she'd been receiving regular payments for over a year. She has three children. Her last payment was October 9. She should have received her next payment last Friday. This may not seem a big delay, but Susan lives from cheque to cheque. The family support office told her that her payments are on schedule, but they don't seem to have the money. She has proof it's been paid. So where is the money? Susan now has an empty fridge and no food to feed her kids.

Minister, I ask you again, how much longer are women and children in this province expected to do without the money they depend on to buy food for their kids?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I've indicated before, I'm not going to respond to an individual case. If the member wants to provide me with details, I am prepared to look into it. But as I've indicated before, we're reorganizing the plan so that once and for all it can work, to the better benefit of those who need it. We're in the course of the reconstruction of the plan and I would hope that within the next couple of weeks we will have the difficulties we've been experiencing completely worked out so that the plan will begin to work better, so that our new centre can be opened and we can get cheques to people faster and be able to deal with —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister, order. Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): People can't wait for the minister to fix these things. As a direct result of your laying off 290 staff and closing eight offices of the family support plan, we have raised examples again and again in this House of women and children who are going without because of a decision you made in order to try and finance the tax cut, and that's the reality, Minister. You may not want to answer to the individual cases, but we tried to fax this case through to your office

starting yesterday and the phone lines are jammed, so I will raise it with you again today; the fax lines are jammed so I've got to raise it today.

1420

Lisa Miller from my riding received regular support payments since August 1994. The last cheque she received, of \$326, was on August 27. She's got two kids, a six-year-old and a four-year-old. She had to go to Coats for Kids, which is a clothing depot, last week to get winter coats for her kids. She had to go to social assistance last Friday and get financial support from the public because the money she is entitled to from the payor is not coming in. Minister, when are you going to realize the effect of your cuts and why are you financing the tax cuts on the backs of these women and children?

Hon Mr Harnick: It should be noted that the member has provided me with a number of difficulties, almost every one of which we have answered. It's interesting to note that almost every one of the complaints that this member has brought to us has been a complaint of long standing. They're indicative of very serious problems that have existed with the plan for a long time and we —

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): No, that's not true.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): You're a liar.

Ms Lankin: That's not true. Tell the truth. Start telling the truth, Charles. It's outrageous you stand there like that.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Apologize.

Ms Lankin: Withdraw that. That's not true.

Mr Hampton: You are a liar.

Mr Pouliot: Somebody's lying. What a bunch of ripoffs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I ask you to withdraw. The fact is that you were out of order. You cannot accuse another member of not telling the truth. To the member for Beaches-Woodbine, you can either —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): The Attorney General —

The Speaker: Order. Member for Cochrane North, come to order.

It's simply out of order. You either withdraw or don't. It's your decision.

Ms Lankin: I'll withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I ask the leader of the third party to withdraw as well.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Lake Nipigon as well.

Mr Pouliot: I shall withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: And the member for London North.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Whom did I accuse?

The Speaker: Member for London North, I heard your accusation.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'll withdraw.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Mr Speaker, I said it too. I withdraw and I meant it too.

Mr Pouliot: Mr Speaker, the Attorney General —

The Speaker: To the members of the third party, I can ask the Attorney General. If that's what he said, he has

a chance to withdraw it. I did not hear him and I did not hear the member for Welland-Thorold.

Hon Mr Harnick: Mr Speaker, what I said —

The Speaker: No, I just need to know if you said it or not, and you can withdraw or not.

Hon Mr Harnick: I didn't say anything of the sort. What I did say was that we have answered the requests that have been made and the vast majority of those complaints have been endemic of the problems with the family support plan for a long time.

NATIVE AGREEMENT

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): My question is also for the Attorney General. In the past there has been a lot of confusion and misunderstanding between the municipalities and the first nations along the Grand River watershed about proposed developments. Along the watershed there are 12 jurisdictions, Ontario and Canada. This often means that there is a lack of communication between all parties. There are frequent misunderstandings. Could you please explain how the recently signed Grand River notification agreement will improve this situation?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, you know you can't — withdraw, please.

Mr Pouliot: I already did. The record will attest to that.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, will you please withdraw. This is the final offer. Please withdraw.

Mr Pouliot: I will withdraw indeed.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The Grand River notification agreement is something that the member for Algoma began negotiations towards in 1994. I'm pleased to say that agreement was signed on October 3, 1996, in Brantford by the 14 jurisdictions involved. It allows for reciprocal notification among parties and provides them with an opportunity to comment on proposals in which they have an interest. This agreement is consistent with our government's approach of helping communities remove barriers to economic development as set out in our aboriginal policy framework. It also supports the framework's principles of openness, equality and stability in relationships between aboriginal people and their neighbours.

I'm pleased to say that we continued this initiative because it was a good one and it was a good agreement for the communities along the Grand River.

Mr Preston: Why is the signing of this agreement so significant and how will it improve relationships in my community?

Hon Mr Harnick: This agreement is the first of its kind in Canada. It's an important first step in establishing relationships based on goodwill and cooperation. The agreement is about being good neighbours and communicating with one another and showing mutual respect for each other's concerns regarding development of the lower Grand River watershed. Having opportunities to share concerns early in the development process will lead to

better relations between first nations and municipalities in the Brantford area.

Again, this is the first agreement of its kind in Canada. We're very proud of it and the benefits that will accrue from it.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While all members of the assembly welcome the statement that has just been made about the agreement, surely you would agree and the minister would agree that it should have been a ministerial statement and not a question in the House.

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have the right to ask any question of any member I want in here and I don't need —

Interjections.

The Speaker: To the member for Algoma, the government can decide how its questions are put and what subjects they're on.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Early on Sunday morning of this week there was a fire in an abandoned chemical laboratory here in Toronto. In that building were some 200 to 300 abandoned containers of highly toxic chemicals. Some of these containers ruptured or exploded and released their poisons into the air, endangering everyone and anyone in the vicinity. To date, we're not sure of the extent of the damage caused and the injuries sustained.

You are charged with ensuring that precisely this kind of thing doesn't happen. You and your ministry are supposed to track down abandoned toxic chemicals and see to their safe disposal. What I want to know, Minister, is why did you not fulfil your duty in this case?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): If the member had been here yesterday, the member for Riverdale asked me this specific question and we talked about it.

I want to clarify to the member for Riverdale that the Ministry of Environment was not allowed on the site until 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon and was there last evening and will be removing all of the toxic materials and worrying about going after the owner of that building later to recover the costs, which are expected to be rather minor because the amount of material there is not very significant in terms of the quantity. The problem is being addressed by the ministry and I'm proud to say that we are being active —

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): What are you doing?

Hon Mr Sterling: They're taking the material away. Didn't you hear me?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It seems those are his comments, all you are going to get. You should put your question.

Mr McGuinty: I want to suggest to the minister that one of the reasons he did not discover this is because he slit his own ministry's throat when he agreed to laying off 752 staff people and cutting the ministry budget by 35%.

1430

I want to elaborate on this scenario a bit more. Several homeless young people were living in this abandoned building. We now learn that three young people have been admitted to hospital for chemically related injuries sustained in this fire. Three youths are in hospital today with toxic chemical injuries because your ministry failed to do its job in terms of providing the necessary protection.

Minister, do you feel any responsibility whatsoever for the chemical injuries sustained by these kids?

Hon Mr Sterling: I guess the government of today and the governments of the past should all feel responsibility in dealing with toxic wastes, which have been neglected by previous governments to deal with the real problems of getting rid of these wastes.

Basically what has happened over the past 10 or 20 years is that governments have continued to put off the decisions as to how to deal with PCBs, for instance, which I believe were part of the waste material here. They put off the decision and put off the decision. As a result, we have literally thousands of storage areas in this province where PCBs are stored.

Mr Crozier: What are you doing?

Hon Mr Sterling: This government is going to face the problem and deal with PCBs so this particular kind of problem will not come up in the future. We will be the first government, the government after the NDP government and your government, sir, which continued to ignore the problem and allowed it to grow. Therefore, I believe we should all take responsibility on this and come to some reasonable conclusions as to how to deal with these wastes.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, but in his absence I'll ask it to the Chair of Management Board. Early this fall your government released a pilot project, an area maintenance contract in the Chatham area, in order to privatize all the winter and summer road maintenance in that area, the idea being that you give the pilot out and you give it a chance to operate so you can assess: Do we go forward or do we make modifications?

We find out yesterday that the Minister of Transportation announced six new area maintenance contracts are going out to tender now and you intend to privatize the entire system, from what we understand, within a three-year period.

My question is very simple. You haven't had the pilot project operate because it hasn't started. What kind of studies or what kind of reports do you have that prove you're going to save any kind of money for the taxpayers of Ontario by privatizing winter and summer road maintenance?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): We have had the benefit of the previous tender process, the previous RFP process from the pilot project around Chatham, and that's been very, very beneficial. We've gone through the process of doing the RFP and we've learned from that particular process.

The government, the Ministry of Transportation, through the business plan process, have reviewed this whole general area of how to provide excellent services, winter maintenance and summer maintenance, to ensure high standards on our roads in Ontario, have set those standards and are now proceeding to save the taxpayers some \$4 million to \$5 million by implementing across the province of Ontario increased involvement from the private sector but at very high standards to ensure safety for the motorists of Ontario.

Mr Bisson: You have no numbers to prove that what you're saying will happen. If you look at every other jurisdiction where privatization has happened, in every case we find that it costs the taxpayers more money in the end. In British Columbia, when they set out to do this and it was studied five years later, they were supposed to save the taxpayers \$160 million. What do we find out at the end? It cost them another \$100 million in addition to what it cost in the first place.

What's more interesting is that I have here a report called the Highway Operations and Maintenance Program Review. It's authored by whom? By the Ministry of Transportation of the province of Ontario. I want to read from what the conclusion was when it came to privatization: "Total contracting of highway maintenance operation is not appropriate," if only for the fundamental reason that it does not generate significant economic savings.

Minister, your own ministry says you're not going to save any money. How can you go forward with this particular plan to privatize? Is this really an ideological drive by this government and is it really about giving big business more opportunity to come to the trough and make bucks at the taxpayer's expense?

Hon David Johnson: First of all, we have indicated very clearly that if there isn't a saving to the taxpayer, we will not be proceeding.

But I think we must remember that even at the present time, summer and winter maintenance of our roads is already about 60% privatized. We're proposing to increase that, but not on the British Columbia model. You've raised the prospect of the British Columbia model. It did not work, and we learned from the experiences in British Columbia, so we will not be going that way.

We will be ensuring high safety standards. Part of this process is to maintain high safety standards for the people of Ontario, and we will be receiving bids in various areas. The estimate is \$4 million to \$5 million in saving for the taxpayers of Ontario.

VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. My constituents in the riding of St Catharines-Brock are very concerned about their environment. They've been asking me how they can be involved and what they can do for the betterment of their community. I'd like to ask you about the use of voluntary agreements by your ministry and specifically how these public and private sector agreements benefit the people of Ontario.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): My ministry is using voluntary agreements as just one tool to achieve some policy objectives through cooperation rather than the intrusive behaviours of past governments. We view these voluntary agreements to be in addition to the regulatory environment that industry and businesses are required to meet. Therefore we are going to have the ability not only to bring pollutants down to a standard but to bring them even lower than that.

These agreements are seen in addition to rather than instead of government regulation. These voluntary agreements, as the former Minister of Environment and Energy would point out, were instituted by the previous government, and we're carrying on a good policy.

Mr Froese: I recently had the opportunity to present, on your behalf, an environmental award to Zehrs Market at the St Catharines Pen Centre store for using cutting-edge technology to reduce silver discharges in their photo development lab. I would like to know how, under the pollution prevention pledge program, the St Catharines Pen Centre location of Zehrs Market was singled out for recognition.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'd like to thank the member for participating in this program that honoured the St Catharines Pen Centre location of Zehrs. They were given a certificate of pollution prevention achievement for achieving the highest level of participation in the pollution prevention pledge program.

Specifically the photo finishing department of Zehrs received the award for implementation of the environmental code of management practices for mini-labs and for the installation of state-of-the-art, at their expense, onsite silver recovery equipment. The changes made by this company have resulted in a discharge reduction of 99.9% of the pollutants. I think they're to be congratulated by all.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Health. The Chatham-Kent Health Alliance has been the target of your government's drastic spending cuts, resulting in the closure of one of Chatham's two hospitals. This is creating a panic among the already underserved residents of Chatham and surrounding area.

Can you assure this House and the people in my community that there will be no closures of the remaining hospitals in the area, namely, Sydenham District Hospital in Wallaceburg and the Four Counties General Hospital in Newbury?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): At this time the ministry is not involved in a substantive way in the local hospital restructuring.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Chatham and the health care leaders there who, I am told, although I've not received anything official from the area, are voluntarily looking at a merger of two of the hospitals in the city of Chatham. It's a most unusual occurrence that I think the local people should be congratulated on because they're way ahead of the politicians on this one. They know they have to restructure their system.

1440

Mr Hoy: Mr Minister, the member representing Chatham-Kent said you were pleased with the report and that the community did not have to be dragged to the altar on this one, so obviously you know something more than what you're stating here.

The alliance estimates its losses of all revenue as high as 28% over the next three years. Will you guarantee that Chatham will receive its full and fair share of funding, \$31 million that is required for capital projects, to ensure quality health care at Chatham's remaining hospital?

Hon Mr Wilson: When we receive the official request for capital funding, we will certainly consider it. I'm very encouraged by what I've heard from the area so far and I would ask them to keep up the good work. They're ahead of many other parts of the province in the direction they're going. They're finding those efficiencies and getting rid of the waste and duplication in the system, and I congratulate the local people for doing that.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I want to seek your assistance today on an issue that affects 25 non-profit organizations in the heart of my community. You may know from reports on CHCH-TV and in today's Hamilton Spectator that there are 25 non-profit organizations that face possible eviction, depending on the outcome of a review currently taking place within your ministry.

The operators of Jackson Square provide office space to these 25 non-profit organizations at no charge as part of their contribution to volunteerism in our community. The adjacent Hamilton Eaton Centre had its assessment rate cut on vacant offices it had on the third floor. The operators of Jackson Square are seeking to have this office space they give free of charge treated the same way. If this doesn't happen, we could lose these organizations from our community.

I'd like to ask you today, if that request is denied, will you ensure that you review the policy so that these 25 non-profit organizations can remain and our community can benefit from their contribution?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'd be very happy to take the question from the honourable member under advisement and get back to him with a response.

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the minister. That's exactly what I was seeking and I appreciate any help that he can offer to these non-profit organizations.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I have been receiving quite a number of calls from my constituents regarding the restructuring proposal for Kingston-Frontenac and Lennox and Addington. Could the minister please inform the House of his recent decision regarding municipal restructuring in my riding of Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm pleased to inform the House that yesterday I approved two restructuring proposals from Kingston-Frontenac and from Lennox and Addington. These are the first restructuring proposals to occur since the municipalities were given broader restructuring powers earlier in the year. They were local solutions to local problems.

I commend the residents of the two counties and their elected leaders for all the hard work and effort they put in to these restructuring proposals. I would also like to thank all the members from the Kingston area for their ongoing advice and assistance in making these proposals become a reality.

Mr Fox: Mr Minister, could you please tell us why these restructurings are so important for Ontario and what the results will be?

Hon Mr Leach: It's indeed a pleasure to respond to the member. Aside from the fact that these were local solutions, the two restructuring proposals will have a number of benefits to the local residents. The proposals will result in fewer but very much stronger municipalities, and the total number of municipalities in the two counties will be reduced from 30 to 10. That's a reduction of two thirds. In the meantime, this will mean that municipalities will be able to better coordinate services and reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication, resulting in great savings to the taxpayers of that area.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the minister responsible for native affairs and it has to do with the Ipperwash situation. You had responsibility for providing the government with advice around handling this issue. It now is clear, from evidence that your ministry has presented, that there was evidence there was a burial ground in the park. At the time of the occupation, which was around Labour Day 1995, were you aware that within the government there was evidence that there was a burial ground in that park?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Certainly it has always been our position that if there is a burial ground there, we are prepared to take whatever steps have to be taken to respect that burial ground. That has always been our position. We have conveyed that to Chief Bressette. We have indicated that we will try to accommodate Chief Bressette in any way we possibly can to ensure that site is respected. That's always been the position of the government and that's been conveyed to the chief.

Mr Phillips: This is an extremely serious matter for the people of Ontario. You will know that you did not answer my question, and I'll ask it again. You had the responsibility, on behalf of the native people of Ontario, for providing advice to the people who were dealing with that situation. It now is clear that within the government of Ontario there was evidence — written evidence — that there was a burial ground within that park. My question is very clear and very important: At the time you were providing advice, around Labour Day of 1995, were you aware that within the government of Ontario there existed evidence there was a burial ground, and did you tell the

government, in its response, about the fact that this burial ground did exist? It's extremely important you answer the question clearly. Were you aware and did you provide advice at the time?

Hon Mr Harnick: It has always been our position that if there is a burial ground in that place, that burial ground will be respected. There have been allegations about a burial ground there; there is no definitive answer as to whether there is a burial ground there. We have indicated to Chief Bressette that we would endeavour to take whatever steps had to be taken to prove the existence of a burial ground and to ensure that sacred land would be protected. We have conveyed that to the chief, we have made that position clear from the outset, and that remains the position of the government today.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You are looking at restructuring of municipalities, and one of those areas we understand you are examining — you yourself have said it's one of the options — is the potential of amalgamating the different municipalities in Metropolitan Toronto into one municipality.

One of the things that puzzles me about this, and that I want to ask you about, is why you are in the process of making decisions as a government on this issue, as seems to be the case, even before you receive the recommendations of Mr Crombie, given that you set up that commission and his work specifically to give you advice on this issue. Could you confirm that you're in the process of making decisions prior to receiving his report?

Second, if indeed you are going to move to one regional tier in Metropolitan Toronto, how are you going to ensure that the tie-in that needs to be there between local municipalities and individual citizens, which local municipalities have concerns about, is maintained in a structure that's as large as two million people being governed by one tier of municipal government?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can advise the member opposite that there have been no decisions made. We are dealing within our government with that issue. We expect to be making some decisions in the very near future, and the representatives on the Crombie panel will have some advice to provide us. When we get that advice, we'll consider it and then we'll make a decision.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to serve notice that I did not receive an answer to the question on Ipperwash, which is extremely important to me, and I'll be requesting from you an opportunity for the minister to appear in what we call a late show here, which is an opportunity for a fuller answer from the minister.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I also have dissatisfaction with the answer from the Chair of Management Board.

1450

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario re cuts in health care:

"Patient care is in jeopardy as a result of a crisis in our health care system due to underfunding and cutbacks. Doctors are asking for common sense to prevail with the government and are calling for the level of funding to match the level of care Ontarians need.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario stop cutbacks and underfunding of the health care system and match the level of funding to the level of care Ontarians need."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from the Minister of Labour's own backyard, specifically the Waterloo Regional Labour Council.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

As I am in agreement with this petition, I add my name to theirs.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Further to a previous petition which already has my signature, I present to the Parliament of Ontario today my fourth petition on condominium overcrowding containing many more names.

"Whereas the present Condominium Act of Ontario does not give the condominium corporations the legal right to limit the number of people who occupy each unit in the complex, thus causing overcrowding situations in many buildings; and

"Whereas this overcrowding creates excessive demand on services and facilities of the condominiums leading to tensions, violence, fire and health problems, increased maintenance expenses and depreciation of values;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly recommend that the Condominium Act of Ontario be amended to give condominium corporations, through their own rules and regulations, the legal right to limit the number of persons per unit and a right of entry to ensure adherence to the rules. The rights of condominium owners and taxpayers must be considered and supported in order to alleviate the inequitable situation."

I endorse the intentions of this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The people of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario continue to be outraged by the decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission and certainly are not prepared to accept the conclusions. I have a petition signed by Florence Richardson that I'd like to read to the Legislature.

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"We do not believe you have made the best choice for the health care system in northwestern Ontario. We are deeply concerned with the speed and the amount of bed reductions you have dictated.

"We are also concerned with your intention to close three hospitals out of the five currently operating in Thunder Bay. These hospitals, although seeming to be concentrated, are in fact providing essential regional service. By reducing the total number of beds from 954 to 526, and in the process eliminating psychiatric and chronic care hospitals, the 428-bed reduction will leave the lives of our families, friends and ourselves at risk.

"If it was your intention to act on behalf of the interests of the public, we, as members of that public, ask you to reflect upon your conscience, for you will be ultimately responsible for the error in this decision."

I sign my name to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from the department of work environment, University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we recently heard that the province of Ontario is planning to eliminate the Occupational Disease Panel in the near future, we urge you to reconsider this decision. Several of us have worked with the panel over the years and have always been impressed by the extremely thorough and rigorous way they have approached the difficult and often contentious task of determining the work-relatedness of disease; and

"Whereas the integrative research reviews of the scientific literature developed by the panel are highly regarded and often cited by the international occupational health community; and

"Whereas the Ontario workers' compensation system has been described as a model for how scientific research can be successfully used in the development of occupational health policy; and

"Whereas we in the United States know the true cost of the contentious, protracted and often seemingly arbi-

trary results produced by a workers' compensation system that relies on the courts to arbitrate these matters; and

"Whereas the Ontario model is not only more rational but also more cost-effective for the community at large;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, hope you will reconsider your decision and maintain this highly regarded and valuable institution."

I add my signature to theirs.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition which was presented originally to the member for Simcoe East and I'm presenting it today on his behalf. In accordance with the standing orders, I'll summarize the petition by saying that it has to do with the law relating to mistreated animals and it's been signed by approximately 1,400 people in the riding of Simcoe East, and I present it today.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 800,000 children who ride the school buses of Ontario are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy from unsafe drivers who are not stopping for school buses; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved, that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 78 be passed. The bill doubles the existing range of fines for identified drivers and establishes vehicle owner liability.

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I affix my name to it.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm presenting this petition regarding the spring bear hunt on behalf of the member for Simcoe East. It contains over 240 signatures, some of which are from my own riding. It is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and reads:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I affix my signature to the petition.

USER FEES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition against the \$2 user fee that is charged to seniors and it's addressed to the assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Minister of Health has started to charge seniors a \$2 user fee for each prescription filled since July 15; and

"Whereas seniors on a fixed income do not significantly benefit from the income tax savings created by this user fee copayment or from non-health user fees; and

"Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 copayment fee will not compensate for the suffering and misery caused by this user fee or the painstaking task involved to fill out the application forms; and

"Whereas the current Ontario Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, promised as an Ontario opposition MPP in a July statement to Ontario pharmacists that his party would not endorse legislation that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government of Ontario to repeal this user fee because the tax-saving user fee concept is not fair, it is not sensitive or accessible to low-income or fixed-income seniors, and lest we forget, our province's seniors have paid their duty by collectively contributing to the social, economic, moral and political fabric of Canada."

I'm affixing my signature to this document.

1500

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to present my petition for the fourth time to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, illness or injury;

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic;

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary;

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require elective procedures to be funded;

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion;

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the province exclusively to determine what services will be insured;

"Whereas there's mounting evidence that abortion is indeed hazardous to women's health;

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993, at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

I'm pleased to affix my name to this petition.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital;

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative government has passed a resolution urging the government of Canada to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada to ensure that convicted murderers serve their entire sentences; and

"Whereas convicted first-degree murderers are allowed to apply to the court for a reduction of the parole ineligibility period; and

"Whereas victims' families must relive the horrors of the original crime through a jury hearing for this early parole and relive this every time the killer is given rehearings for early parole; and

"Whereas the provincial government must bear a large degree of the costs involved with a jury hearing;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Attorney General of Ontario to request the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to reconsider his decision under Bill C-45 and to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada."

I agree with this petition and I have so signed it.

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): I have a petition here from the Kingfisher Lake first nation regarding the Harris government's destructive policy to privatize TVOntario, and it reads:

"We, the undersigned, strongly protest any plans to privatize TVOntario. The privatization of TVOntario would jeopardize Wawatay radio network's native language programming and Wahsa distance education services because both depend on TVO's distribution system."

I am pleased to support the chief, council and residents of Kingfisher Lake in their efforts, and I attach my name to this petition as well.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a further petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed C-68, An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearm smuggling and trafficking, and a ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the street and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I have signed this petition.

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I also have another petition, signed by the residents of Sioux Lookout and the New Life Assembly ministries. Pastor Mike Davis and his congregation are also concerned with what this government is doing to TVOntario and to our first nation communities. The petition reads:

"We, the undersigned, strongly protest any plans to privatize TVOntario. The privatization of TVOntario would jeopardize the excellent educational and information programming provided by TVOntario. The sale of TVO would also jeopardize Wawatay radio network's native language programming and Wahsa distance education services because both depend on TVOntario's distribution system."

That's signed by a good number of people in Sioux Lookout, and I also attach my name to that petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the community of Barrhaven lacks any secondary schools to educate the large number of students living in this area;

"Whereas Barrhaven is the most rapidly growing community in Ottawa-Carleton;

"Whereas the National Capital Commission's greenbelt severs the community of Barrhaven from Nepean, forcing many students to take potentially dangerous, unsuper-

vised, long-hour trips on public transportation in order to travel to school;

"Whereas Nepean's high schools are significantly overcrowded;

"Whereas both the Carleton Board of Education and the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board have undertaken significant cost-saving measures to help reduce the construction costs of these high schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly urge the Minister of Education to recognize the unique educational needs of Nepean and provide the funding required to build both of the proposed high schools for Barrhaven."

I've affixed my own signature thereto because I'm in complete agreement with the petition.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Cochrane South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Chair of Management Board concerning privatization of road maintenance. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Also pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his questions given by the Attorney General concerning native affairs and Ipperwash. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I talked briefly with the Attorney General, who is unavailable tonight and said it would be fine with him if we dealt with it on Thursday night. I wonder if I might get unanimous consent of the House to move that to Thursday night.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COURTS IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES TRIBUNAUX

Mr Tilson, on behalf of Mr Harnick, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to improve Ontario's court system, to respond to concerns raised by charities and their volunteers and to improve various statutes relating to the administration of justice / Projet de loi 79, Loi visant à améliorer le système judiciaire de l'Ontario, à répondre aux préoccupations exprimées par les œuvres de bienfaisance et leurs bénévoles, et à améliorer diverses lois relatives à l'administration de la justice.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Last week we spent two days on clause-by-clause of Bill 79, which is the Courts Improvement Act, and several amendments were made. We had some debate on some of the issues and I will now proceed to make some comments with respect to Bill 79 with respect to the third reading of that bill. I would again like to highlight a few of the purposes of

Bill 79 and report on the amendments that were made in committee, which have been made since the second reading of this bill.

Bill 79, as I indicated during the second reading debate, has four distinct purposes. Firstly, it creates the office of the case management master, which will allow for the expansion of civil case management. Secondly, the names of Ontario courts will be changed to clearly reflect their function and status and make them more recognizable to the public. Thirdly, the bill gives charities more flexibility in their affairs by allowing the Attorney General to make regulations to relieve charities of the time and expense to obtain court approval for non-controversial issues. Finally, fourthly, the bill will make a number of housekeeping and other minor amendments to the Courts of Justice Act and the Children's Law Reform Act.

At the outset, I would like to bring your attention to the amendments made to the bill by the standing committee on administration of justice last week.

1510

There were two legislative drafting errors, which were corrected, dealing with the composition and mechanism of the appointment of the Family Rules Committee and the Charities Accounting Act.

Another change concerns the regional courts management advisory committees. The committees are composed of judges, lawyers, court administrators and members of the public. These committees provide advice and recommendations on any matter that affects the operation of the courts.

I would like particularly to single out the member for London Centre and former Attorney General, who spoke at some length during second reading debate. I believe members of the committee and certainly this side of the House respect the knowledge and information that she had available to give at that time. She spoke at some length during second reading debate and at committee about the need for some mandatory requirement for meetings of the regional courts management advisory committees. The Courts of Justice Act currently requires that these committees meet at least four times a year. In our view, this requirement was no longer necessary since the members of the committee should decide the number of meetings that are required. However, we certainly understood and she made quite clear her position with respect to the meetings of these various committees. The bill was therefore amended to require that there be at least one meeting per year. I'm sure this doesn't satisfy the complete concerns of the member, but hopefully it offers her some satisfaction.

Another amendment to the bill was the renaming of the Trial Court of Ontario to the Court of Ontario. The Court of Ontario is the overarching court which links both the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice. Both of these courts have appellate functions, and as a result it was considered inappropriate to refer to the overarching court as a trial court.

Lastly, the Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Justice will remain the president of the Court of Ontario but will no longer be referred to as the Chief Justice of the Court of Ontario.

During the committee debate, I said that we believe the current names of the courts were intended by Mr Scott, the former Attorney General, as interim steps only in a process that was never, and likely could never be, completed. Therefore, in order to properly reflect the true function and nature of the Ontario courts, Bill 79 renames the Ontario Court (General Division) as the Superior Court of Justice, and the Ontario Court (Provincial Division) as the Ontario Court of Justice. We believe these changes will go a long way in satisfying the concerns which have been raised by the judiciary and will clarify the various levels of Ontario's courts.

All of these amendments that were made at the committee were relatively minor.

Bill 79 allows us to move forward with a key recommendation of the Civil Justice Review. As you are aware, the Civil Justice Review is a joint project of the ministry and the judiciary. It also includes members of the bar and the public. It was created to consider the issues of delay and cost in the civil justice system.

The central recommendation of the first report of the Civil Justice Review, which was released in March 1995, was the implementation of a province-wide system of case management. Case management involves the setting of firm time standards and the judicial monitoring of cases from commencement to resolution. Judges, rather than lawyers, will determine the pace of the litigation and we believe this will help move cases through the system faster.

Case management masters will play a crucial role in the development of case management in working with teams of judges to ensure that time standards are met and costs are kept to a minimum.

The introduction of the office of case management masters and the expansion of case management throughout the province represent only part of the government's civil reform package. I am happy to list some other steps that have been or are being undertaken.

On March 11 of this year the simplified procedure rules came into force for cases under \$25,000. These new rules are aimed at speeding up the process and lowering the cost of cases at the lower end of the monetary spectrum. The electronic filing project in Toronto, business process engineering, short- and long-term technology strategies, continuation of the Toronto alternative dispute resolution projects and other mediation strategies form part of the reform of the justice system.

Lastly, I am pleased to say that work has begun on the consideration of new regulations to be made under the Charities Accounting Act. These discussions will include lawyers, chartered accountants and representatives of the public. As we have noted earlier, the function of the regulation will be to allow charities to deal with certain non-controversial matters without the time and waste of resources involved in making formal court applications, as is required now, at least prior to this bill.

The amendments of the Charities Accounting Act which allow the making of regulatory guidelines will cut through unnecessary red tape and encourage people to volunteer their time for worthwhile charitable organizations.

Those are essentially the comments I'd like to make with respect to this bill. In closing, I would again like to acknowledge the input from members of the opposition during the proceedings before the standing committee on administration of justice that led to the bill which is now before the House in the current form it's in.

I can't emphasize enough that the support from the third party was appreciated. The member for London Centre, Mrs Boyd, took the time to really consider this bill. We certainly appreciate the non-partisan approach to a bill that will allow us to improve the efficiency of Ontario's civil courts.

Bill 79 represents only the tip of the iceberg. The present government will continue to improve the civil justice process in Ontario. I expect there will be more issues and improvements that will have to be considered as a result of the final report of the Civil Justice Review, which is expected very shortly.

In closing, I would like to thank all those individuals who have given their time and energy to allow us to come forward with this legislation. Their dedication has resulted in the provisions you see before you in Bill 79, as amended, and we will continue to consult with these individuals as we move forward with the implementation of case management and the other objectives I have touched on today.

1520

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am pleased to be able to address this bill briefly this afternoon, as I did on second reading, and to express some of the concerns that remain about this piece of legislation, or perhaps about some of the other legislation that has not been forthcoming while this legislation is proceeding.

First of all there are many components of this bill that I believe would develop a consensus in this House. There would be some considerable support, since all three parties have certainly indicated the need for some of the changes that are being made. For that reason I don't expect this to be particularly controversial.

What I am concerned about, however, related to the court system and not addressed in this bill, are the very significant cuts to the budget of the ministry of justice, or the Attorney General's department as we call it provincially. Last April in the budget the government announced some \$120 million in justice cuts, of which \$60 million and 606 jobs came out of the Ministry of the Attorney General. You cannot have that drastic and that rapid a reduction without affecting the services that are provided to the justice system. As is the case in so many other ministries of this government, we're seeing an ideological desire to see government downsized extremely rapidly and drastically, and for that reason I think we're going to see some problems arising in the court system.

Mr Harnick, the Attorney General, promised there would be no reduction in core services at the time the Provincial Treasurer announced these substantial cuts. Yet despite the promises to attack what you would call hard-core crime, Mr Harnick announced that 70 crown attorneys, or 15% of the prosecutors, would in fact be cut.

This doesn't sound like a law-and-order government to me. They portray themselves as a law-and-order government, but when it comes down to investing the necessary

funds to carry out the responsibilities of the justice system, we see them abdicating that responsibility by making rather significant cuts.

Here are some statistics that I think will be of particular interest to members in the House and will convince the government members, I'm sure, to reconsider this bill, withdraw it and start over again: Over 50,000 criminal cases were lost in 1990 due to unreasonable delays in the justice system, and right now there are fewer provincial court judges in Metro than there were at that time and the backlog is growing. Surely you require those justices to carry out the responsibilities of the courts. If we do not have them, we can only anticipate that the backlog will continue to grow.

Again according to press reports, court delays and backlogs at this time threaten about 50% of criminal cases in Ontario, mainly because they're taking too long to come to trial. There have been decisions of the court that said if these cases take too long in coming to trial they might even be dismissed. Much to the chagrin of many of us who observe the court system, but nevertheless it's a fact, when the government is making these cuts we're bound to see this happen in the future.

According to ministry statistics 49% of the 1,105 outstanding General Division cases in Metro have been in the court system for more than eight months and about 30% of cases in Peel have been in the system for that length of time. In response to this potential crisis Dave Moran, executive assistant to the Attorney General, has stated the ministry may use a team of experienced prosecutors and go in and blitz the backlog regions. We shall see if indeed that happens. But certainly there is a problem out there. A lot of people are going to be concerned that people who may be guilty ultimately will be let off because their case has not proceeded through the courts.

It's clear to us in the opposition that there is a shortage of personnel in the most serious problem in Ontario at this time. There are as of September 23, 1996, only 461 prosecutors in Ontario, down from 481 earlier in the year. The government has not replaced 20 crown attorneys lost through attrition this year, and indications are that this trend will continue and the crowns who on staff now will face an ever-increasing caseload.

Roy McMurtry had something to say about this. I well remember that Mr McMurtry, a former attorney general, a distinguished member of this House and member for Eglinton, has been critical of this government. He has called for more judges and staff for the Ontario Court of Appeal, stating that it will be unable to resolve cases within the case management framework recommended by the Civil Justice Review.

Chief Justice McMurtry has stated that the US appeals courts have at least four to five times the number of judges, law clerks and lawyers for the same caseload and that Ontario has fewer appellate judges per capita than any of the other Canadian provinces.

This is Roy McMurtry; this is not somebody in the opposition. This is a Progressive Conservative, and I must say the word "Progressive" should always be in front of the word "Conservative" when speaking of Roy McMurtry. That is his evaluation. I always took into account his

views when he was in the House previously. I thought he came forward with some reasonable initiatives that were supportable. He is not a member of the Reform Party. He is not a member of the right-wing fringe that now dominates this government, with the present whip shaking his fist, showing that he has full control over his caucus in this regard.

These problems will not be addressed by the creation of new court facilities, by changing the names of the courts or by spending public funds on new signs, letterheads and official forms. I'm glad to hear one thing, that as a result of the pressure from the opposition the government is now not going to spend money on new letterheads and signs and forms. That's something positive we've been able to achieve. I could just imagine how they were getting the presses and the sign makers all set to change all of these at a great cost. Now we find that they're not doing so.

Perhaps with some of those savings we'll have some money to make up for the very deep cuts that have been made in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Despite the fact that the minister has made representations — and I've supported those representations — his colleagues have cut him off at the knees and have taken away a lot of the funds he needs to carry out his responsibilities. I'm very sympathetic to him in that regard and to all the rural Conservative members here who are worried about that, and justifiably so.

Whatever reason there is, there's no justification for the waste of what could be \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money on signs and letterheads for the courthouses. So here we are, we've played a role, we've stopped the government from doing this. The printing presses have been stopped, I'm told, and the sign painters have been told that the government will not proceed. It is nice to know that the opposition can certainly have some effect in that regard.

The Attorney General can demonstrate his real commitment to reinvesting in the justice system by investing in sufficient staff to handle the growing caseload and court backlog in a timely, efficient and professional fashion. That would do more to build public confidence in the justice system than any name change or new facility could accomplish, and I hope the government moves in that direction.

As I said, we find some parts of this bill to be supportable. It's not a revolutionary bill the way some of the bills we see coming into this House are revolutionary. This has less to do with dogma, this has less to do with ideology than most of the agenda of this government. For that reason, we're quite conciliatory. In fact, I anticipate this bill will be completed this afternoon, as we can be very reasonable about that.

The bill on VLTs is another matter. I'm not going to speak on it this afternoon, but it's another matter compared to this. I'm drawing a comparison with this bill, which has a consensus in this House, which really represents Conservative policy. I think people would agree that this is nothing different from what the Conservatives would have promised or what we'd anticipate they would do. However, the VLT bill is another matter, because it was not in the platform and not found any-

where. That's why it's taking a little longer to be considered by members of this House.

In this case there isn't a secret report from the police to do with this bill that should be produced before this bill goes further. I compliment the parliamentary assistant; he's provided all the information that's needed for this bill. That sets a good example for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the Solicitor General, who should be providing the secret report from the police on criminal activity in gambling to this House. We have a good example, by my good friend the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General in this case providing the information. Would that, as they used to say in Latin class, the government would do the same on the situation with the VLT bill. "Would that" I think was the ablative case. My former teacher, Vince Dugo, would have told me that indeed that was the case. I cannot confess to being a Latin scholar, but I do remember the ablative case; I think it was the ablative case anyway.

1530

I wish the government would use this pattern in other bills. I know the critic for the New Democratic Party, the member for London Centre, spoke at some length the other day and was very constructive in her remarks. She found a few things she thought needed fixing, but she was very constructive in her remarks as well because she recognized that there was no secret report the government was hiding on this bill, as it is on Bill 75. She understood that this bill was in keeping with what the government probably said it was going to do, unlike Bill 75, the VLT bill, which will allow for video lottery terminals in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario. I wanted to get that in one more time, that that's what that bill is going to do.

I anticipate we'll have a few speakers from this side. The member for Kingston and The Islands, who has had some experience in the courts, I know will want to offer some opinions on this, I think more informed than those of many of us who don't have a direct dealing with the court system on a daily basis and hope not to be in court for any purpose other than the swearing in of new judges.

That reminds me of another aspect of this bill that is important: the appointing of masters. I hope this won't be done on the basis of patronage positions. I hope there isn't a long lineup of Tories out there looking for jobs in the court system who will be looking for the job of master because we started to see a move away from that. When Ian Scott was the minister of justice, we started to see a system put in place. When the member for London Centre was minister, we reviewed the judges. There was a panel out there that looked at them and said: "Okay, it doesn't matter whether these people" — I'm on to the judges now, not the masters — "are Liberal or Conservative or NDP or have no political affiliation. How do they fill the job? What qualifications do they bring to it? What resources personally do they bring to that particular job?" I think that was positive, because it was bringing to an end the politicization of the system.

I would have thought, for instance, my good friend the member for Ottawa-Rideau, a former judge himself in the court system of Ontario, may have had some inside track on such a job because he was a Progressive Conservative.

I'm told that over the years in the federal system from time to time there were political considerations, when Brian Mulroney was appointing Tories and other parties were in power and probably appointed, once in a while, highly qualified people who were of their own political lineage. I understand that. I don't think anyone even objects to the fact that, for instance, Mr McMurtry, whom I mentioned, has his esteemed position, because he's a person of quality, a person of high qualification. That doesn't matter in this case; it's simply a matter of looking at how qualified the person was.

I worry a bit about the masters, whether there might be a tip of the hat to those who are in keeping with the Reform Party, sorry, the Conservative Party that sits across from us. Is that a Freudian slip, when you say that?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Yes, it is.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Yes.

Mr Bradley: That's what it is, a Freudian slip. I hope that doesn't happen.

Anyway, you can tell I have an intricate knowledge of the details of this bill this afternoon. There are a few lawyers in the House who have no doubt advised the minister on this matter. I simply make this plea in the latter part of my address, because I certainly don't intend to speak for 90 minutes on this occasion; more like 20 minutes would suffice —

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Mr Bradley: To which? Oh, the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I don't think the court system will work the way the Niagara Escarpment system works, but I want to compliment the member for Carleton, who is here today, the Minister of Environment and Energy, who now has responsibility for the Niagara Escarpment Commission. As he heads out the door, I implore him to appoint people who are going to protect the Niagara Escarpment, as I know he wants it protected. The door opens; he has departed.

I hope they are non-partisan appointments, because I think this system works better when the only component is not what a person's political affiliation happens to be. In other words, there are a lot of other considerations. Good people out there — I remember when the Liberal Party was in power there were Conservatives who were appointed to various positions, New Democrats, people who had no political affiliation, and indeed there may have been some Liberals who were appointed at that time as well —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): No.

Mr Bradley: The odd person. I know that will surprise you, but that did happen. I think it's particularly in the —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Was it a mistake?

Mr Bradley: I don't consider it a mistake. Mr Villeneuve, the Minister of Agriculture, says, "Was it a mistake?" I don't think so. I think appointing people of various backgrounds is very important, and that's why I hope the government, when it's appointing these masters —

and the former Attorney General tells me it's a somewhat detailed, technical type of job, so she has assured me that we're less likely to see partisan appointments in this case. But I hope the presidents of the Conservative associations across Ontario have not got their list ready for the position of masters, because I know this government has stated its desire to see people off the public dole. We don't want to see several Tories entering the public dole in terms of all these appointments that are made simply because they are Tories or they went to the fund-raisers or things like that. I can't believe that in 1996 that could possibly happen, but I certainly implore the government not to do that.

Finally, as we always say, I reiterate for members of the House the need of this government to put the necessary resources into the court system, the justice system, to ensure that it's working efficiently and effectively, because if you want to be known as a law-and-order government, you have to walk the walk and talk the talk both. That's a saying that we use, I guess, in the 1990s now. In other words, you have to be prepared to invest the funds in the justice system to ensure the safety of people in this province, to ensure that we will not see people going loose, people escaping the justice system simply because their case is taking too long. I can't believe that all the cuts that are taking place are going to have a positive effect. I think in fact they're going to have a negative effect on our judicial system and that again we will pay the price somewhere along the line.

I want to, as I say, give a sufficient opportunity for my colleagues in the Liberal caucus to discuss this a little later on. I know there's a long lineup of speakers who wish to offer some opinions on this subject, even though I anticipate the bill will be completed this afternoon, to the relief of the government whip. I don't think he may even have to round up the troops at the conclusion of this debate because I say, generally speaking, I think we've got a consensus in this House and I'm pleased when that consensus is developed and pleased to be able to once in a while be in accord with what the government is doing when it doesn't embark upon a revolutionary course but on a truly commonsense course, as it is in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr Tilson: The member for St Catharines gave his usual inspiring speech. I would like to correct him on a couple of things.

First of all, the bill deals with the civil courts, not with the criminal courts —

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: Indeed, indeed. He spoke about Chief McMurtry's request for more judges, and I might remind him that that request must be fulfilled by the federal government. The other issue, of course —

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: I'll be looking forward — perhaps the member for St Catharines will deal with the federal government and the cuts that it's making to the system in all kinds of things, whether it be education, whether it be health. Indeed, that's a problem that we have here in Ontario.

1540

The other issue was that there was only \$66 million in reductions. The member spoke of substantially more than that. The Attorney General made this clear in the Legislature last March and April. The difference in published amounts is due to the government move to accrual accounting methods.

The member has spent some time on the masters, and I will say that the whole purpose of the creation of the masters is to eliminate much of the bureaucracy that's been going on in the system. Anyone in this House who is a lawyer knows exactly what lawyers do: They have a tendency to sometimes slow down the process.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, no.

Mr Tilson: I'll look forward to the member for Kingston and The Islands talking about that, but we all know that happens. In other words, the agenda of many of these trials is in the hands of the lawyers. We're simply saying that's inappropriate. The system moves slowly and we hope the masters will relieve much of that problem.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitowlin): I always appreciate the comments of the member for St Catharines. One of the most interesting portions of his speech was when he alluded to the amount of information that has been provided to the opposition on this particular bill. As members would know, this bill, while important, is not what anybody could call earth-shattering. This is a technical bill that deals with issues surrounding the courts, and most of those can be supported by members on all sides. However, he pointed out that in Bill 75, a much more controversial bill, we over here in the opposition have been looking for information that the government appears to have and does not wish to provide us with. I talk about a police report on the video lottery terminals, or slot machines as they're more commonly known, that has not been provided to the opposition and the public of Ontario.

As we look at the possibilities of criminal involvement and the mob, so to speak, being involved in video lottery terminals, that is information that any member of the House, and indeed the public, would want to know about. It seems to me that this kind of information is necessary for the people of Ontario to make a reasoned and understood decision on having video lottery terminals in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in the province of Ontario. As we stand here speaking of Bill 79, the contrast with Bill 75 is completely significant. I appreciate the member for St Catharines bringing that to our attention so that we might see the paradox in the government's position.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): With respect to Bill 79, I will speak to this bill and not the other bill that my friend opposite was speaking to. I would like to draw the attention of the House to the importance of civil justice in the province of Ontario. We talk often about criminal justice in this place, but the law-abiding taxpayers of Ontario frequently have disputes which arise in the ordinary course of business, and it's absolutely important that we have a civil justice system that functions efficiently.

We have been faced with a system in recent years where a normal civil action would take four, five, six,

seven years to get to trial in what has been rather inappropriately called the Ontario Court (General Division), to be quite properly renamed the Superior Court of Ontario in this bill, so that it's, like the other provinces in Canada, a superior court and named a superior court. But to have justice delayed like that for five and six and seven years for cases to get to trial is outrageous and not an appropriate service to taxpayers.

With this bill and with pre-trial masters there'll be some reduction in that, I hope, particularly in the pre-trial stages and in the motions stages. This is absolutely imperative if the government is going to provide the judicial service, the justice service to taxpayers in Ontario, not only to individuals but also to their businesses and proprietorships so that they can have access to the courts for which, after all, they pay.

I'm also pleased that the bill will correct the appellations of judges so that all of the judges in the province of Ontario, whether appointed federally or provincially, will be referred to by the same titles for the first time in the history of this province. I think that's appropriate to avoid confusion, unnecessary differences between different levels of courts, because every case is important.

Mr Gerretsen: I certainly agree with the comments that the last speaker has made and also the comments that my colleague from St Catharines has made. I think we have to recognize the fact that certainly lawyers are probably the category of people who are the most to blame for delays in courts and in the justice system. Being one myself, I know that's probably not a very popular stand to take among my colleagues, but I certainly concur with that.

I think the government could have gone one step further, though, in this bill. It could have, for example, raised the Small Claims Court limit beyond the \$6,000 that it is now, and I believe it's \$10,000 here in Metro Toronto. It could have raised it to \$10,000 or \$20,000, because certainly it's almost inexcusable in a lot of cases where people are arguing over \$7,000 or \$8,000 to have a three- or four-year time delay take place before a matter comes to trial.

There is nothing that puts our system of justice in ill repute as much as the delay factor. The fact that there are competent Small Claims Court judges around, quite often members from the local bar associations —

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): There are?

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, there are — who could in effect adjudicate upon these matters in a very efficient, quick and expedient manner speaks a lot for itself.

There's absolutely no reason why the government can't raise the limit from the \$6,000 to a much more reasonable amount of \$10,000, \$15,000 or \$20,000. It certainly worked when it was increased recently, about five or six years ago, from the \$1,000 to the \$6,000 limit. People are getting justice in a much more expedient fashion. I think that's what the public of Ontario is looking for.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I am always happy to hear from members of the legal profession on these matters. It's very helpful.

I did want to mention why I think we're seeing so many cuts in the court system. It's why we're seeing cuts in the education system and the health care system and services to disabled people and so on, and that is, obviously, it has to finance the tax cut. This government is bringing into effect a 30% cut in provincial income tax. That will benefit the richest people in our society the most. Because the richest people already make the most, they're going to get the most money back from this.

As a result, we have to have this government making cuts, because they would have to borrow, by the calculation of my friend the Liberal critic for finance, some \$13 billion in order to give you and me and the people of this province a tax break. I don't know why. No economists I've ever found will tell me that it makes sense to borrow money to give a tax break. They say: "Once the budget is balanced, once we have a budgetary surplus, this may make some sense. But until that time, why would you borrow more money to give a tax cut?"

Well, there's another way of doing it. They can make substantially more cuts. Despite the fact that the Minister of Finance, at the end of the last budget, said the cuts are over, and we saw significant cuts to the justice system in this province, we're obviously going to see more because the Premier says: "That's not enough. What we need are \$3 billion more in the way of cuts." So I think we can anticipate that the justice system, about which this party talked so much in years gone by with the excellent speeches being made by some of the members who are now ministers — we're going to see further cuts in the justice system and further trouble as a result of the tax cut.

Mrs Boyd: I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak again on Bill 79. I want to say to my colleague the member for Wellington that he may have blighted my entire career by being so complimentary about my support of this bill. But he should understand that when the government does something that is right, that is in the interests of the people of Ontario, we will always support.

One of the issues we have when we face a bill like this is, what is in this bill that is going to make the world a better place to live for people in Ontario, and what may not? That is the focus of our attention on a bill like this.

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I say to members that indeed much of this bill facilitates a change that has been discussed and suggested with a high degree of consultation, not only among those in the legal profession, those in the judiciary and those in courts administration, because those groups of course internal to the workings of the justice system obviously are major stakeholders, but the Civil Justice Review, the very large and detailed report which gave rise to many of the changes the Attorney General is proposing in Bill 79, was probably the longest and most detailed consultation that has been held on the workings of the justice system in Ontario. It was held with members of the public all over the province, not just those who are engaged within the legal system but those who come to the legal system as consumers.

What is really important about the Civil Justice Review is that it was the first time, in many cases, that those engaged in the legal profession and certainly those in the

judiciary heard from the lips of consumers themselves what the justice system looks like to those who are not initiated into the mysteries of that system through legal training. It's important for us to recognize that the kinds of changes that are being implemented are changes that are to shift some of the balance back to the consumer of the system, the person who comes to the legal system to obtain justice. That's an extraordinarily important factor when we look at a bill like this, and it is important for us to be sure that the changes that are included in Bill 79 will in fact have the effect that was intended by the Civil Justice Review.

So we come to the areas where we certainly had some criticisms of the bill as it stands. The first item is an item that was mentioned by my friend the member for St Catharines, and that is the whole appointments process for masters. The real concern we had was that this would be a mechanism whereby a huge pool of people would get the quasi-judicial experience that might enable them to be an obvious pool for the appointment of both federally appointed and provincially appointed judges, and that if there were no appointments process that ensured that people were appointed as masters because of their excellent qualifications, because of their ability not only to understand and know the law but their ability to be administrators, their ability to follow a court process from beginning to end, their ability to be strong but diplomatic with all the players involved to ensure that the timetables anticipated by this bill are put in place and become reality to those who are consumers of the services of the justice system.

It was a great relief to me, quite frankly, that when the minister came to speak to the justice committee he made some commitments to us about the appointment of these people, and his commitment was that these case management masters would be appointed as we now appoint justices of the peace; that where vacancies come available, there will be an advertisement that there is a vacancy and that advertisement will include what the qualifications are for the job; that there will be a committee of people formed to vet the applications for that job and to interview candidates; and that the recommendation that comes to the minister for appointment through the Lieutenant Governor of the province, through the Lieutenant Governor's council, would follow the same process that has been in place for some years by the justices of the peace. I say that was a great relief because it adds a public component to the appointment process and ensures that there will be qualifications for the job that need to be met by people coming forward, but something other than merely holding a party card. Of course these days it's a little hard to tell which party we were worried about, whether it's the federal Reform or the Progressive Conservatives, but it will involve the abilities of the people who come before those committees and there will be a screening process that ensures that people who get these jobs are qualified to have them.

The Attorney General also assured us that the qualification of at least 10 years' experience before the bar would be one of the minimum requirements for this job. That is also an important aspect, because particularly if this pool of people becomes the obvious pool from which

judges are then chosen, it is important for those minimum qualifications to be there as they are for judges. It would be a shame to have someone come in and be a case management master with less experience within the courts than is required for a justice and it is found at some point during or following their seven years' appointment that they were subsequently appointed to the bench without having had the opportunity for that kind of experience within our courts. That's very important.

The minister also said the salary is already set. He said these people will be making \$110,000 a year. Some members may understand that one of our concerns was that these folks could well be a very expensive proposition, that judges who currently earn in the area of \$124,000 at the provincial level or \$150,000 at the federal level provided a range whereby these folks might be appointed. The minister said no, that the intended salary was to be \$110,000 and that people would be applying for these jobs knowing that was the set fee for this job. That allayed some of the concerns we had that this system, however it worked, might add quite considerably to the cost of the justice system. That is a legitimate concern, because at a time when the Attorney General is being asked to take \$66 million out of his budget for administering the justice system it is important for us to be sure we are not adding another layer at a time when we are delayering in virtually every other ministry, in every other function — adding another level that was going to be terribly expensive.

It will be interesting to see whether high-calibre candidates put themselves forward for these jobs with those kinds of conditions and whether they are able to function in the way that's envisioned by the bill and indeed by the Civil Justice Review. I certainly hope they will because we need that function there, that quasi-judicial function of moving things along, very much. We need to have a system that requires everyone in the system, most particularly lawyers, to follow a timetable that discourages the kinds of delays that have created so much frustration for consumers of our justice services on the civil justice side. It is extremely important that these people be seen as being credible, qualified and convincing to all the players within the justice system and that they have the necessary authority to exercise the kind of control they will have in the way that process works.

That brings me to another area of concern we had. It became very clear in our justice committee hearings that there is a bit of a jurisdictional problem the minister has through the way these people are being appointed. Let me explain that when we suggested these appointments be made through the judicial advisory committee that exists to appoint provincial judges and when we suggested there needed to be a disciplinary process that involved the judicial council, the Attorney General and the members of his ministry explained to us that this would not be appropriate.

1600

Why would it not be appropriate? It would not be appropriate because all of our mechanisms that are set in place by the provincial government — the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee and the judicial council — are there to exercise those functions with

respect to provincial appointees and with respect to the courts that are the responsibility of the provincial government, but the case management masters will not be functioning within that context. They will be functioning within the context of the federally appointed justices, within the context of the federal jurisdictional matters within the courts. So they explained to us very kindly that it would be inappropriate for those committees, either the judicial council or the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee, to have any say around these people.

A question then arises. We are appointing provincially case management masters who are under the jurisdiction of federally appointed justices and virtually all whose work will take place within the federal court system. I don't know about anybody else, but to me that says we have a system where we don't have the kind of accountability the public is demanding within our judicial system. We have heard demands from the public at both the federal and provincial levels in virtually every jurisdiction across this country that judges and justices be more accountable and that the processes put in place under judicial councils — the disciplinary processes, the selection processes, the monitoring processes, those processes whereby the code of conduct is set — be more accountable to the public served by the system. We have seen that happen to varying degrees.

We were a leader in this province when we put into place our Courts of Justice Act, which this amends, because we took into account the need for that level of public accountability. A lot of those changes are there, and we have heard from the public a much larger sense that they own and are a part of the accountability system for provincially appointed judges. It's a good thing we have done. It tends to allay some of those suspicions the public has about the behaviour and the conduct of judges, and we indeed have heard much concern about that in our province.

The reality with these case management masters is that they will be neither fish nor fowl. They will be appointed by the provincial government, so the federal government will have no say over their appointment, their qualifications or their pay, and yet the provincial government that appoints them will have very little control over how they conduct their business. That will be entirely up to the federally appointed Chief Justice.

This does not seem to concern the Attorney General, his parliamentary assistant or the bureaucrats in the Ministry of the Attorney General. They believe that the check and balance that's provided by the Chief Justice having that kind of control is sufficient, and they assure us that we ought not to worry because these people are not appointed for life. Let's look at the appointment process. These people are appointed initially for a seven-year period. Once that seven-year period is up, these people are eligible to be reappointed for terms of three years each an infinite number of times, and that reappointment for three years will be on the recommendation of the Chief Justice; no input from any public committee, no input from the Attorney General's ministry, but from the Chief Justice. That is not accountability, in my view, and I think it is a problem.

Similarly, in the discipline area, we believe very strongly that it would be appropriate for there to be a disciplinary mechanism, an accountability mechanism similar to the accountability mechanism that is now in place in Ontario for provincial court judges. These people will be performing many of the functions, and this bill gives them explicit jurisdiction over a vast number of functions that previously could only be exercised by justices.

Justices who are federally appointed have the federal Canadian Judicial Council, and that is the mechanism whereby accountability is ensured for federal justices. Provincially we have the provincial Judicial Council that exercises that kind of accountability for provincial judges. In the middle, we have this quasi-judicial appointment of case management masters who will not have the same level of accountability as the justices or the judges with whom they are to work.

I think that's a problem and I think over time the government will see that it may be a problem. The reason it is a problem is that the job these people are required to do is to exercise control over the professional activities of lawyers as they pursue cases through the court. They will be the ones required to ensure that lawyers follow the rules in terms of the timetable, follow the rules in terms of filing, follow the rules in terms of the process as it goes through, so it is important for us to understand that they are very central to this new vision of how the civil justice system will work.

That is why our party has said all along that while we support this bill, we support the function of case management masters, we continue to be concerned about the accountability of case management masters under the scheme as it has been proposed by the current government, because we have real qualms about whether it will be possible for these individuals whose role is going to be key in ensuring that the changes in the civil justice process actually happen — they will be neither fish nor fowl. The complaints against them — and there will be many, because I can assure you it is not easy for people to change their ways; it is not easy for a system to turn itself around and become efficient and follow timetables when it has not done so in the past. It is, I suggest, unfair to these people to put them in a position where any kind of disciplinary action is very much a secret kind of process, a process that does not involve the public, where there can be no public scrutiny of what goes on.

Now the minister says the process will be similar to that of deputy judges and that ought to be sufficient. Let me say as I did when I spoke to second reading, deputy judges are in a very different position than these people. Deputy judges do not work full-time on an appointment that initially is seven years and then is renewable, *ad infinitum*, every three years. Deputy judges do this work very much on an almost *pro bono* kind of basis, because most of these folks are fairly senior counsel who make more in a day — a great deal more in a day — pursuing their private practice. They are doing it partly to gain experience, partly as a contribution to the justice system, and they perform a very good function. But because they act in a situation that is very much one which sees a lot of effect on the general public, they also have a lot of complaints, and those complaints are generally because

people don't like their judgement. That's basically what the complaint usually is. Of course that's not the kind of complaint we are talking about when we talk about case management masters.

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With case management masters the real issue will be, was due process followed? Was the exercise of the timetables fair and evenhanded? Was the way in which they managed cases through the system to the benefit of the consumers who are trying to go through the system? Are they accomplishing what was envisioned by the Civil Justice Review? So I would say that with regard to this whole issue of what are complaints, how they go, we will see over time.

The minister said: "Well, most of these people will only deal with lawyers and with court administration and with judges. Most individual consumers will not have a direct contact with these people." That offers scant comfort, because very few people who come to the justice system understand how it works. If they find their case shoved along and they find their lawyer resisting, they are going to feel that somehow the system has not been fair to them. Because they are not hearing the explanation directly from a case management master, they will have to take the view of their lawyer.

As someone who has worked as a lay advocate with people who have real difficulty dealing with both their lawyer and very often the lawyer on the other side and find themselves often feeling as though they are being coerced by a system, I can tell you that it is very scant comfort that case management masters will not have a direct contact with the general public.

The biggest problem we have in our legal system, whether it's the civil justice system or the criminal justice system in this province, is that citizens do not know how it works. It is not a transparent system. They do not understand who the players are.

It was very clear in the Civil Justice Review that one of the requirements that should be there is much greater understanding, much more transparency on the part of the system to those who come seeking justice. It is important for those who come seeking justice to understand who the players are, and yet I can tell you, in both civil and criminal courts most people coming before the bench have questions like: Who's that person? What is the function of this officer? What kind of authority does this person have? Where am I in this picture? The real concern in the civil justice system is making sure that the consumer feels that their need for due process in a very complex system is met.

So it is scant comfort to me for the Attorney General to say, "We don't need any of this transparent accountability for case management masters because they won't have contact with the general public." It seems to me that when someone is such an important player — and we have to understand that this is a very important layer that is being added — that is the very time we need to be assured that accountability is there and that it is transparent, and that we can be sure that those who act appropriately are seen to be doing so and those who don't are sanctioned for not doing so. That is the real concern in this whole area.

We also don't have at this point in time any real sense of how this whole new system is going to be phased in, and that's another issue for people. My colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands, for example, says, "Is this just going to happen in Toronto and Ottawa — people have only talked about Toronto and Ottawa — or is it going to happen all over the province?"

Well, that's a legitimate question because the masters who were in the system previously, the appointment of which was ended by the previous Liberal government, did not exist in all parts of the province. They existed only in Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, London and Windsor. In fact, I'm not sure that they existed in Hamilton. I know that in London and Windsor there was one master who worked between the two for a number of years. The issue is, is this going to be available? Are we saying this is going to be available throughout the system?

People using the civil justice system in other parts of the province, in places like Owen Sound or Timmins or Kapuskasing or Kenora, very often feel as if they are not getting the same level of service as people in the more highly serviced areas like Ottawa and Toronto or London. The reality is that we hear among district bar associations real concern that the centralization factor will apply in the civil justice system and that people will say, "Oh, we can get through the courts more quickly in Toronto," or Ottawa or London, therefore those litigants who have cases will stop using their local lawyers and will apply to have their cases moved to a centralized area; and given that there has been constant advice certainly to our government — I can't believe it isn't the same for the current government — that court facilities and court availability be changed dramatically.

I'll give you an example. For years there has been a suggestion on the part of courts administration that there be no court facility existing in Elgin county, that all the work done in Elgin county be centralized to the London area. There is reason for the district bar to be concerned about that kind of centralization because it means that people are not getting justice close to home. It adds to the cost of seeking justice for those who want to litigate in the civil system and it means a great shift in terms of the kind of work done by various firms.

Some of you may say: "Should we be concerned about that? Isn't that an issue the legal profession should worry about?" I would say no, because there are enough blocks to litigation now on the part of those who have legitimate disputes that need to be brought before the courts. The cost of those disputes is high enough but it is important for us to have a recognition that those disputes are probably best dealt with close to home.

I think that's another issue for us. We do not know to what extent these case management masters will be appointed across the province and to what extent they will be concentrated only in the high-volume court areas where the Attorney General needs to make the biggest change to effect the savings he's talking about in the system.

We also had an assurance that the savings from the case management system would be sufficient to buy not only the technical kind of expertise needed but that the hardware and software and salaries and benefits of these

case management masters, their offices, that sort of thing, can be obtained out of the savings. I must say that's what the Civil Justice Review said.

The Civil Justice Review envisioned this change as being one of a shifting of resources rather than added resources. They were very clear about that. But I can assure you that if the minister imagines he can make the savings out of this change and hand them back to the general revenue fund, there will be real dismay within the system. That was certainly not the vision that was held by the Civil Justice Review. They were under no illusion about the extensive need for very real technological change within the courts.

The need to ensure that the education and training around that streamlining for those who are active within the court system was an extraordinarily important aspect, and that requires an upfront investment, a real investment into the systems themselves and the training of people to ensure that they can use the systems. It is extremely important for us all to understand that the appointment of case management masters and the cost of their salaries and benefits and offices and parking spaces and whatever else are only a very small part of the investment that needs to be made.

I asked the Attorney General quite bluntly about how he expected to get the capital dollars he requires to put the technological changes into place. It became quite clear that the government is not prepared to do that unless they privatize a lot of operations and hand those functions over to the private sector.

Now, that is not entirely something that could be classified as a necessarily bad thing. It may be an appropriate way to get that investment in and to get it used.

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It will be inappropriate if what happens is that we see the same kind of thing happen as we've seen in the family support plan, that the expertise of those who currently work in the courts, the expertise that has been built, that we've paid for through the training of those people, that we've paid for again and again in their salaries and their benefits, would disappear and we would see that expertise lost to us while some privatized operation that has never managed court function immediately takes on that kind of function.

We have already seen this Attorney General take a system that, while it was not perfect and certainly was not working for all of the people who needed it, the family support system — we have seen him take that system and make an abrupt and sudden change in it that made sure it didn't work for the people it was working for. I would say that in the kind of technological change that is envisioned to make this case management system work, we have to be sure that this same kind of incompetence and bungling does not exist. It is extremely important that this be done in a gradual way, that the systems be put in place in such a way that cases aren't getting lost the way they are in the family support plan so that people who have been satisfied and have had positive experiences with the administration of justice do not become disaffected as a result of that incompetence and bungling. It will be extremely important for us all to be keeping an eye on that.

When we talk about the court system, most of the public comes only with their problems. We know we don't hear about the cases that work smoothly. We don't hear about the cases that go well, but there are some in the system. Yes, there are people whose cases drag on for five to seven years; there are others whose cases get resolved much more rapidly.

We must be sure that in his zeal to put in change, the Attorney General makes sure this change happens in an orderly way, that this change doesn't destroy what was good about the system and create an even bigger mess. We've seen that happen in our experience with the family support plan. It is fine for the government to say, "Well, it's a temporary thing." It's not a temporary thing for those recipients of family support who were getting their money and now don't know how to feed their children, don't know how they're going to make next month's rent or next month's mortgage.

It is really important, as we go through this process and as we support this bill and support these changes, that we have an assurance that they are going to be implemented properly. As someone who has been in government long enough to know that policymaking may be the long suit of the Attorney General's ministry, they make wonderful policy. Implementation is not one of their better accomplishments. Implementation of many of the changes that we put into place was a very rocky business.

One of the things that was identified in the strategic plan of the ministry was an inability to implement effectively really good policy changes. I would say to the minister and to his parliamentary assistant that this is an admitted failure within the ministry. As a result of the strategic planning process, which involved everybody who was working in the ministry at the time, there was a clear acknowledgement on the part of people from the bottom to the top of the ministry that implementation was probably the weakest part of the whole process.

I would urge that the minister and the parliamentary assistant take that into account in putting these changes into place and recognize that it will be necessary to ensure that the talent required to implement smoothly, to implement in a way that solves problems and doesn't create problems is in place. That's going to be very necessary. Given the kind of commitment we heard from the minister, from the ministry staff and from the parliamentary assistant, I have every hope that in fact that will be taken into account and this will be implemented as quickly and as smoothly as possible.

One of the other areas that was important and where the government did in fact make a change in its act — they were going to repeal entirely the requirement for courts administration regional committees to meet. Our government had said that we wanted them to be able to meet four times in a year because we felt that with the enormous changes that were happening in the court system it would be really necessary to be monitoring at a local level through all the players involved — the judiciary, the legal profession, the courts administration and the public — that in fact those changes were being put into place in an orderly fashion.

The government responded to my concern by saying that yes, they will require them to meet at least once a year. They wouldn't go back to the required four times a year, but they would require that they meet at least once a year. I'm delighted that they were prepared to make that change because I think that where regional courts administration committees have worked well, they have assisted the major participants in the system to effect the kinds of changes that need to be effected. Where they have not worked well, where there has been reluctance for the parties to work together, where there has been scepticism about whether or not it is important to approach changes in the system from a team approach, in fact we see some of the more serious problems in the system.

I am delighted that the minister and the parliamentary assistant — the government — agreed to a change that would require those committees to meet at least once a year because I think once you get all those players together in the room, we will see the same kind of magic happen that frankly happened in the civil justice review itself. When the parties get together and give their different impressions and understand that there is a misunderstanding both in motive and intention in some of the things that are being done, when there is a requirement that they understand what the concerns are on each side, those parties speaking together can solve the problems.

I'm delighted that at least the minimum requirement of one time a year is there. I hope that the members of those committees will take the momentum and find that there is in fact enough for them to do, there is enough change happening, that it is important for them to be active players in that change, and that it is important for them to be requiring the occasion on which to meet to talk about that sort of thing. It is a wonderful monitoring device.

The regional courts administration committee, for example, is the one that looks at whether or not criminal and civil cases are moving through the system as they are required to do; that is the monitoring body that looks to see whether the changes that are envisioned in the case management model are in fact happening in that jurisdiction and, if they aren't, problem-solves about how to make sure that they will. It is really important, I think, for the ministry to enthusiastically support those regional courts administration committees in the task that they have and for us to understand that it is one way in which there can be real pressure on all the parties in the system to cooperate with the enormous amount of change that needs to be made.

When we deal with a bill like this that has very little resonance in a community that is not concerned with an actual nitty-gritty operation of a court system, it's really hard to get people engaged in the importance of this kind of action. I would stress, as I have on a number of occasions, the reality that this process, if it works as it is envisioned in the civil justice review, if it works the way the minister, in his speech to the justice committee, said he envisioned it working, should make an enormous change in a lot of the dissatisfaction that has been expressed about the civil justice process.

A society is very much measured on the way it offers justice to its community. Although in civil justice issues many people do not understand the complexity and the emotion — indeed the seriousness — of many of the issues, it in fact affects many, many people's lives. It may affect their livelihood in a very real way, and certainly many of the disputes involve people who are locked in a dispute around various activities that have a very direct effect on their livelihood. So it is important that this process be smooth, that it be accessible by people no matter what their ability to pay, that it be accessible to people who require the services of the courts, that it be accessible and understandable.

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In closing, I simply suggest to the minister and to the ministry that the process of education that began with the Civil Justice Review process needs to be continued. We need to be helping people to understand how the civil justice system works and who the players are, how the criminal justice system works and who the players are, and how the pressure on the criminal justice system affects the civil justice system and vice versa, because for those who are uninitiated it might seem we are talking about a system that doesn't somehow intersect, and of course it does.

We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country which requires a certain process and timeliness for criminal cases. We have not had a similar kind of thing in the civil justice area. What we see is that the constitutional pressure to move criminal cases through the courts has often taken precedence over the civil justice matters that come before the courts. Justices and judges are fully engaged in trying to ensure that constitutional rights are met within the criminal courts and very often the scheduling has seen a real detriment to those who are pursuing civil issues.

It is really important that as we move forward with the changes that are happening in the courts we be sure there is much more literacy, if you like, about how our courts work, what the pressures are on our courts, what the requirements are for the process that's going to change. The minister is going to need the continued support of the public to ensure that the changes in the court process, particularly the timetables and schedules that are envisioned in case management, actually work. He will get that kind of support from the public only if they understand why this will benefit them.

The Civil Justice Review clearly said there needs to be greater public education around how the courts operate and how the courts can be used most effectively. It is important for us to give, if you like — and it really annoys the legal profession, I know, when I use this terminology — consumer education to those who are seeking justice in the province so that they know what to look for, so that they know how they can be positive players in ensuring that their own case goes forward, so that they are not at the mercy of those who, by the parliamentary assistant's words, are the ones who often make the decisions that slow up cases.

One of the biggest myths in the legal profession is that clients are the ones who instruct their counsel. The reality is that this is how it's supposed to be. Clients are supposed

ed to give the instruction to their counsel. Counsel are supposed to carry out the instructions of their clients. But if the client has a limited amount of information, if the client does not understand how the system works and depends upon the lawyer to give them that information and the lawyer has control over that information, it very severely restricts the ability of the client to give instruction. If the lawyer says, "I think we should hold this up for a couple of months; it won't make any difference to your case," many clients may feel unhappy about that, but they may not know that their right is to hear their matter heard or go to the next step very quickly.

In this timetabling and scheduling issue that's involved in case management, if clients are to be part of the solution to the problem in our courts, they are going to have to understand how the system works. The Ministry of the Attorney General has devised a number of very important brochures and booklets to explain to those engaged in the criminal justice system and in the family law area their rights. It is important that we have the same kind of information come forward around the case management system in the civil courts, because otherwise it will be very difficult for clients to be part of the solution and not be part of the problem.

In closing, we will be supporting this bill. We have concerns about how it is actually going to operate. We certainly will be monitoring how it operates. We'll be monitoring how the appointment process goes. We'll be monitoring whether the kinds of results envisioned through the case management model are actually being experienced by those who are seeking justice in the province of Ontario. But we would assure the Attorney General and the government that this system, if it works, will make a big difference. If it doesn't work, if it results in the kind of mess we've seen in the family support plan, then we will be criticizing very severely the implementation of what could be a very good way of resolving some of the holdups in the civil justice system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): It's a pleasure to rise in my place this afternoon to address the House on Bill 79. I appeared in the justice committee two weeks ago with the Attorney General to debate this bill clause by clause. We were pleased to have him present there. Our party too will be supporting this bill, though we have some concerns I would certainly like to bring to light today.

One of the main areas of change in this bill is a very superficial change, and that is to change the names of the courts. As members of the House will know, two previous attorneys general a while back had made a change. The Liberal Attorney General, Ian Scott, had combined the three different courts in Ontario into two divisions, as they will remain today, and gave them new names. Now the two divisions remain, but the names are again going to be changed. What this is going to do in many minds in the legal profession, people in the judiciary and many lay people who find themselves in whatever role going to court, whether as jurors, accused or as witnesses, could be confusing.

Why it could be confusing is that in response to the criticism about the added cost of making this name change, the cost of changing signs and changing letterhead, the minister has assured us that he will phase that in over time so that there will not be some additional cost. We would applaud that because there are many more areas of interest that we in the opposition, the Liberal Party, have that the Attorney General deals with in regard to family support and the number of convictions he is pursuing. We don't want to see him wasting money on name changes. To do that, though, he's said he's going to keep the old signs while the courts are renamed and keep the old stationery while the courts are renamed. In a way that's just going to add to the confusion.

I would refer to an editorial that the Toronto Star had July 10 of this year titled "The Name Game." Madam Speaker, maybe you remember this song that was out years ago, "The Name Game"; you weren't even born then, I don't think. It goes: "Okay, repeat after us: The Ontario Court (General Division) will henceforth be called the Superior Court of Justice. And the Ontario Court (Provincial Division) will become the Ontario Court of Justice." The editorial goes on to say that the minister states that he is doing this to try to alleviate the "public confusion" over the courts' names." But the point is made that if they're going to proceed with business as usual, with the old letterhead and the old signs, yet call then a new name, it is going to be very confusing for people. It seems to me that it really isn't broke when it comes to this, so why are we trying to fix it? What we're going to be very concerned about is that we not spend money to do this.

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The editorial goes on to say:

"Harnick should have looked before leaping. Spending money on new signs and letterhead would, of course, be inexcusable at a time when the government is cutting needed services and staff. But changing the name without educating the public will actually make the system more confusing. Where's the common sense in that?"

That is what the Toronto Star said, and we concur. We really think that changing the name here may get rid of a problem the Attorney General has with some of the senior jurists in this province who are upset with him for other cuts that he is pursuing in his jurisdiction and this is the way of trying to maybe get some peace in the criminal justice system in Ontario.

Our justice critic, Bob Chiarelli, the member for Ottawa West, estimates that the cost of changing the signs and the stationery could possibly be as high as \$2.5 million. The ministry has denied this, and we certainly hope the ministry is correct. Mr Chiarelli points out that the government will have to incur staff costs for notifying other jurisdictions about the change, as in any jurisdiction there is correspondence between courts in various provinces and various countries, as many of these cases transcend our jurisdictions. To eliminate confusion, to make sure the correspondence and the evidence are addressed correctly, these other jurisdictions will have to be notified. I'm not sure how you're going to do that on the old stationery, notifying: "By the way, please ignore the letterhead. We've now changed our name." I guess

there is a middle road here in what you do in incurring expense or creating confusion, so we hope the ministry does well in trying to eliminate confusion but at the same time not incur a greater expense to the public of Ontario.

Some other people are concerned about the name change. One is John McMahon, who is the executive legal officer to Chief Justice Patrick LeSage. He made some comments in a July 9, 1996, article in the Toronto Star about the name changes. He also disputes the notion that the name changes will cost money. He is saying that all the court letterhead and filing forms will be used up before any new supplies are ordered and that there's going to be no additional cost for redesign.

We must talk about the signs. Talking to the Attorney General in the justice committee a couple of weeks ago, I asked him about the signs. He made the point, which I think was quite valid, that many of the permanently etched signs across many of the courthouses in Ontario say "Courthouse." That's all they say, so up to now really there is no confusion. If you get subpoenaed or summoned to court for whatever reason, usually in your locale you know where the court is. It's simply identified, usually by a carving in the block above the door in some of the old courthouses, that it's the courthouse. The individual names aren't usually used.

But once you come inside the court, and especially if you're in a larger jurisdiction such as any of our metropolitan centres here in Ontario — Toronto, Ottawa, London or Windsor — as people will know, there are various courts within the courthouse. I would think that once you get your notice that you are being summoned to one particular court, the government is going to have to change the interior signs in the courthouses to direct witnesses, laypeople who want to observe the court and all the staff at the very beginning as to where to go and where to be directed in the courthouses across the province.

There is going to be a cost, even though the government denies it. The Toronto Star contacted a sign maker who for 35 years had experience in providing signs for government here in Ontario. They gave him an example of the sign outside the East Mall courthouse in Etobicoke and, based on that example, he said the cost of replacing the courthouse signs would range from about \$1,500 to \$5,000 each. Refacing those signs only, and that is sliding in a new nameplate while leaving the outside structure intact, would be at least about \$1,000. He said, "I can't see very much less for \$1,000."

That means if each court building had only one sign, and several of them have more, as the parliamentary assistant knows, the cost would range from \$160,000 to \$800,000. Maybe with some volume discounts there might be a bit of a percentage knocked off that, but I think we're still talking some substantial expenditure in doing this, something that's primarily cosmetic.

At the same time, Madam Speaker — and I know this is of interest to you and that you have brought it up in the House many times, and many members of the House have brought this up — we are very concerned, in the very same ministry, about the changes the minister has brought forward in regard to the family support plan. In making those changes, the same as this bill, trying to

streamline, trying to save money, we have now caused so much disruption in people's lives in this province, especially in this case now of single mothers with children who depend upon the receipt of those support payments on a timely basis every month so that they can keep their households together. The changes this minister has made by closing down those regional offices, I believe, are causing a lot of hardship, and we have the evidence in this House.

When we see the Attorney General weighing in now in other areas such as changing the names of the court-houses, bringing in new systems as to how the civil law will be marshalled through the civil court, we're very concerned that he not botch this up as he has botched up the family support plan. All the members of this House from all parties are receiving hundreds of complaints about the —

Mr Tilson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: No matter how the member from Timiskaming tries, there is no way that he can connect the family support plan issue to this bill.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): It's not a point of order.

Mr Tilson: It has absolutely nothing to do with this bill — absolutely nothing. I suggest that he stay on the topic of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, that is not a point of order. I believe he's talking about the justice system. If you listen, there may be some connection made here. The justice system is being discussed.

Mr Ramsay: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr Tilson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The problem with what we're doing in this bill, this bill does not deal with the entire justice system. It deals with a number of issues and we've been quite specific: It has to do with charities, it has to do with the change of names, it has to do with case management masters. Again, it has absolutely nothing to do with the issue of the family support plan.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, I've heard enough. Thank you. Take your seat.

Mr Tilson: Madam Speaker —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel, I've been listening carefully to the member, as always. There's a certain latitude, as we all know, given in debates. I listen carefully, and if members stray too far from the topic for a prolonged period of time, I intervene, but it is my ruling that that has not happened at this point.

Mr Michael Brown: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm a little disturbed that the government appears to be trying to limit debate to only particular issues that they wish to speak to, without allowing members to put it in the context in which you have to place issues of public importance.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, that also is not a point of order. I don't see that that's what is happening here. I have ruled the point of order from the member for Dufferin-Peel out of order. Would the member for Timiskaming please continue.

Mr Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In returning to the bill and my discussion that the parliamentary

assistant was in attendance at in the justice committee a couple of weeks ago, we brought up a lot of points like this though because our concern is that we certainly believe there is going to be an expenditure here that will be incurred by the Attorney General's office in making these name changes through expenditures for new signs and stationery that surely are going to come from trying to alleviate some of the confusion. At the same time, we have seen cuts in the overall Attorney General's ministry budget, and from that we have seen a reduction in crown attorneys across the province, 70 crown attorneys. About 15% of prosecutors are going to be cut. Our concern is that while we are focusing on a bill to change the name of courts but yet their function remains the same, we are not as a jurisdiction vigorously pursuing criminal convictions, as we're letting many charges go that we used to prosecute fully and then punish fully. That's a concern to people.

1650

I would say to the member that this bill certainly fully relates to the whole exercise of the Attorney General's department and where the priorities are of the Attorney General in making these more or less cosmetic changes to the system while at the same time we feel other programs that are under his charge are being neglected. I think it is all related.

As an example, over 50,000 criminal cases were lost in 1990 due to unreasonable delays in the justice system. Right now there are fewer provincial court judges in Metro than there were at that time, so we see the backlog growing. Once again, according to recent press reports, court delays and backlogs threaten about 50% of criminal cases in Ontario because they're taking too long to come to trial. So that's a concern. While we look at getting maybe some new signs and some fancy new names that will add to the confusion, meanwhile we're letting people off the hook. We think that's wrong and should not continue.

According to the minister's own statistics, 49% of the 1,105 outstanding General Division cases in Metro have been in the court system for more than eight months now, and about 30% of cases in the Peel region have been in the system for that length of time. In response to this potential crisis, Dave Moran, executive assistant to the Attorney General, has stated that the ministry may use a team of experienced prosecutors to go in and blitz in the backlogged region. Again, we only hear from the Attorney General's office that maybe they might be doing that blitzing and getting these prosecutions caught up. Meanwhile, the actions we see are these more cosmetic things that are contained in Bill 79. We're going to be changing the names of the court and not putting the money where it's really required, and that is getting these backlogs and prosecutions caught up so that justice will prevail in the province.

It is really clear that there's a shortage of personnel. It is probably the most serious problem in Ontario at this time in this particular ministry. There are, as of September 23, 1996, only 461 prosecutors in Ontario, down from 481 earlier this year. The government has not replaced 20 crown attorneys lost through attrition this year, and indications are that this trend is going to continue, so the

crowns who remain on staff are facing ever-increasing caseloads. This is a very big concern.

In addition, I just remind the parliamentary assistant that Chief Justice Roy McMurtry has called for more judges and staff for the Ontario Court of Appeal, stating that it will be unable to resolve cases within the case management framework recommended by the Civil Justice Review. Chief Justice McMurtry has stated that the US appeal courts have at least four to five times the number of judges that we do in this jurisdiction, law clerks and lawyers, for the same caseload, and that Ontario also has fewer appellate judges per capita than any other Canadian province.

I think it's clear that while we worry about changing the name of the courts, we're not addressing the real problem, and that is getting the personnel into our courts and getting our courts open like the Americans do — night court in the evenings, opening them up on weekends — to start using the facilities properly rather than like we do at sort of 10 till noon and 2 to 4 or 2 to 5, to really start to use the infrastructure that we've got, bring in more personnel if needed, and get this backlog addressed.

I don't think the people are going to stand for letting people charged with serious crimes be let go in this province, because then law enforcement becomes a farce. It's also a slap in the face of our police, who risk their lives on a daily basis on behalf of all of us out there in investigating and making those arrests and then find that all that hard work is for naught because the judge says the case has not been brought before him and his court in a timely manner and is therefore dismissed. That is very demoralizing to the whole system, especially to our police officers, the men and women who are risking their lives on a daily basis out there, and they deserve better. We should be supporting our police; they've got a very tough job to do. I'm not sure there are too many people in this Legislature who would trade their positions for their positions, especially today and especially in our big cities. It's very tough out there in any aspect of the criminal justice system, but especially for the front-line officers.

I think in respect for them, in respect for the criminal justice system, we should be marshalling the proper resources to make sure the Attorney General's office has the resources to handle the cases that the police and the Solicitor General bring forward so that all these cases can be brought to fruition. We think that's very appropriate.

These problems, we don't believe, are going to be addressed by the creation of new court facilities, by changing the names of courts or spending public funds on new signs, letterhead or official forms. One study commissioned by the association of law officers of the crown has shown that if the government is forced by the staffing cuts to look to outside counsel for legal advice and representation in civil matters, it will end up costing the province tens of millions of dollars, as outside lawyers working on government contracts tend to bill about \$169 per hour as opposed to the \$110 per hour effectively paid to government lawyers. We think it's pretty serious, it's pretty important, and we ask that the Attorney General,

after this bill passes, starts to focus on what we believe are the real problems.

It really is clear that the so-called Courts Improvement Act is a thin disguise for the government's true agenda, and that is to change the names of the Ontario courts for the second time in five years. We think it's a needless and costly change because it does nothing to redress these real problems that I have just outlined.

We think it's also a point in that exercise that it's not going to deal with the fictional — and I think it is only fictional — public confusion over the present system. In fact, by changing the names of the courts for the second time now in five years, this bill is likely to worsen and not reduce public confusion as to what the courts are called and what their particular functions are. Perhaps this name change, as I suggested earlier, is a patent effort to appease senior judges in Ontario by restoring their status as Superior Court judges. Maybe there's some other motivation; I don't know.

Whatever the reason, there's no justification for the waste that, as I said earlier, could amount to \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money on new signs and letterhead in the 160 courthouses in Ontario. I certainly argue with the parliamentary assistant that I'm sure in the 160 courthouses across the province there is going to be a need for new signage almost immediately if people are going to find their way in the courthouses to the particular courtrooms that they need to go to. I suspect that is going to have to happen.

It's also absolutely inexcusable for this government to be fiddling about with the name changes and spending taxpayers' money on new courthouse signs and letterhead while this court backlog that I've talked about threatens 50% of the criminal cases on the books now in Metropolitan Toronto. I certainly hope the parliamentary assistant passes on these remarks to the Attorney General so that we will know for sure that we will get rid of this backlog and we will not have people whom Metropolitan Toronto Police have charged, and in many cases have in custody awaiting trial, just let off because of the untimely manner in which these cases are being handled.

While the government continues to allow the number of prosecutors to dwindle, Ontario's Chief Justice is calling for more judges and staff to handle the existing caseload. We support Ontario's Chief Justice in that to make sure that the personnel are there so that this backlog can be reduced.

1700

The Attorney General's other feel-good announcement about the improvement of the court sites in Toronto and the construction of new courthouses in other parts of the province at this time is going to do nothing to speed up the resolution of cases that are backlogged right across the province if there are not enough prosecutors to plead these cases or not enough judges to hear them in a timely fashion.

The emphasis now is on consolidating these courtroom facilities, building new courthouses across the province in certain centres, but in the short term that is not going to prevent many of these people who have been charged with criminal offences from getting off scot-free.

It's important that we let the Attorney General demonstrate his real commitment to reinvesting in the criminal justice system by investing in sufficient staff to handle the growing caseload and court backlog in a timely, efficient and professional manner. That would do more to build public confidence in the criminal justice system than any name change or new facility could ever accomplish, as proposed in this bill.

The resurrection of case management masters may be helpful in speeding up the resolution of civil court cases in Ontario. I'm sure the parliamentary assistant is pleased that I have something positive to say here.

Mr Tilson: Yes.

Mr Ramsay: I knew he'd be happy. We welcome any measures that might achieve this goal. I know some of my colleagues in this House have concerns as to your appointment process with these case management masters. It looks as if we're going back to sort of the good old days. Where we've moved on, let's say, in the appointment of judges to a more open process with more public consultation and review, now with these case management masters we're going back to a system of straight appointment, and these people — let's not kid ourselves — will have a lot of influence on how some initial decisions are made and how court cases flow through the system.

They will have a lot of power and I think the government should consider rendering this process to one similar to that we now have in the case of the appointment of judges. That would be something the government should be reconsidering so that the general public would have some confidence that the same open democratic system is in place in the appointment of the case management masters. We would welcome any changes that these measures might achieve towards that end.

However, this measure will do nothing to resolve those serious problems unless the government plans to invest proper resources and planning and appoint sufficient masters to handle the vast volume of work. On the one hand we've seen a reduction in the Attorney General's staff, primarily staffers, assistants and prosecutors, so we have to wonder whether we are going to see an appropriate appointment of management masters to manage the caseload in Ontario courts after we've seen the budget cuts. Where is this money going to come from? That's a concern, because the government has already failed to show its commitment to ensuring there is a sufficient number of judges or prosecutors.

It looks like we are adding another position and the position of case management master may be one that could bring some efficiency to the court management system, but if you don't put the resources into all the personnel needed — these new case management masters and the prosecutors and the judges — we are not going to see any dwindling of the backlog that really haunts the Ontario court system right now, and as I said, up to a caseload backlog of 50% in Metropolitan Toronto.

We have a lot of concerns about this. On the whole, the idea of bringing in specialists to case manage the workload of the courts is a good idea as long as the resources are there. I wish there was more emphasis on that and all the resources maybe went to that rather than

worrying at this time about a name change. It seems to me the name change is superfluous at this time. People tend to know where the courthouse is, but it is going to cost money once people get to the courthouse. So I think it is going to cost some money.

Rather than put the money there, it would be better to have postponed the name change for the different divisions of the court and to put all the resources that would cost into personnel, bring in these new case management masters for sure, beef up the number of prosecutors, eat away at the backlog, and once we got that in balance, then if you thought it was desirable look at the name change. But I think you have bitten off a little too much right now.

I really question whether the Attorney General's ministry is going to have the resources to carry it all out in a timely manner and make sure we don't see people who are charged today and awaiting trial let off without their day in court. I think the people in Ontario deserve a better criminal justice system than that. People should have their day in court. Let me say it is a crime if those people don't get their day in court.

As I said, the police have done a lot of work in those investigations. In many cases we're holding people. They deserve to have their day in court and the general public deserves to know that the investigative work our police forces have done is not going to waste, that the perpetrators who have been charged with these crimes are going to court in a timely manner and are going to get off because they're innocent, if that's the way they're found, but hopefully not get off just because their trial did not come up in a timely manner. That's a big concern of the people of Ontario. I bring those points forward to the parliamentary assistant and I hope he will pass those on to the Attorney General as we continue debate of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tilson: I always enjoy hearing members from the Liberal Party give comment, because it's hard to understand what they're saying. Both the member for Timiskaming and the member for St Catharines indicated they're going to be supporting the bill, yet the member for Timiskaming spent most of his time being highly critical of the bill. I observed him reading the notes from, presumably, their staff and I again point out that the notes he was referring to are incorrect, that the bill deals with civil courts, not criminal, whereas he spent a lot of time in that area. I'll again remind him, as I did the member for St Catharines, that Chief Justice McMurtry's request for more judges must be filled by the federal government. So perhaps he could communicate with his federal cousins in that regard.

He made some comments about the Askov case. I've got to remind him that the Askov crisis, where cases were thrown out because of long time delays, was caused by the Liberal government. Poor old Mr Hampton, the present leader of the third party, had to take the blame for this when he was the Attorney General, but that was really highly unfair because clearly the crisis was caused by the Liberal Party. I think the Liberal Party has a lot of nerve coming to this place at this time saying there is a crisis in the courts when generally a lot of those crises were caused by their party.

The issue with respect to case management is to improve the process of the system to make it move a little better. We have a history of masters in the province going back at least 120 years. While case management masters are not like the office of masters, they're very similar to them. When the Liberals abolished the office of masters they created a crisis in the courts which we've been left to deal with, and we're just doing exactly that: We're dealing with it.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? I'm sorry, to the member for Cochrane South, I should have recognized you first. Go ahead.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): That's okay, Madam Speaker, we have all been known to slip every now and then. You don't do it often, so we'll let you get away with it.

I listened in the lobby to the speech by the member for Timiskaming and this is what I have to say: The bill in itself is a step in the right direction. Let's be clear here. A number of issues are dealt with in this bill that we would have done if we were still in government: deal with a lot of the problems we find within the court system.

One thing I would like to have heard a little bit more about is the whole concept of case masters. Simply put, case masters will handle cases within the courts to try to speed up the process. The problem is that they're not going to be following any kind of process by which to hire these people. As it is currently, if you hire a justice of the peace or a judge there's a fairly public process, a fairly well scrutinized process in place to make sure the appointed person is not a political appointment, because you don't want political appointees of the government in your courts.

One of the problems with what the government is doing in this particular bill, with the case masters, is that the appointments are going to be done solely at the discretion of the government, and there's really not going to be, within the law, any kind of way to be able to check to find out who the Tory cabinet has appointed to the position of case master. I think that's the highest form of political patronage that you can see in a land where the government ends up controlling basically what goes on in the courts through the process of having to appoint their people in.

1710

I say to the government, not a bad idea to have case masters, but what you at the very least should do is revert back to the process, which is what we do with the justices of the peace, which is that there is a process by which people can apply, there is an interview process of people within the community who are going to be the people in the end who are most knowledgeable about this and that the public appointment be made open, not something behind closed doors where you're able to appoint your political cronies to the positions of case masters, which will be the case with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? The member for Timiskaming, you may sum up.

Mr Ramsay: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from either side of the House to my remarks today. To the member for Dufferin-Peel, who commented

first off the mark after I spoke, I just wanted to say to him that my comments about the backlog in criminal cases in Ontario were made to show that where the emphasis by this Attorney General is where he's putting his resources. My point of view is that we have a larger problem in the completion of criminal trials in this province and that that is a more important problem than the backlog and the confusion and delays that happen in civil trials in Ontario. No doubt there are problems in both sides of trial law in Ontario, but for the general public the concern that people have is when resources are not put in place that expedite criminal trials.

With this bill we see the emphasis going to the other side of trial law in Ontario and not putting the resources in the crown prosecutors, in the criminal judges, and continuing on to the facilities to receive those people after sentencing. We've seen the elimination of some of the community-based programs that corrections once supported. We're really seeing a diminishment of law enforcement in Ontario, and that's the point I was making: that the first big piece of legislation we see from this ministry is a bill that changes some names, is going to cause some expenses and marshals through civil law cases a lot faster, but what I'm saying to the member is, that's not the priority of the majority of the people in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Kormos: Here we are, it's 12 minutes after 5. I understand that this is going to be voted on this evening at a few minutes to 6. It's going to be a voice vote. We've got less than an hour left, and I know the member for Kingston and The Islands wants to speak to this. He has some important things to say so I'm going to take a little less than the 30 minutes that I would otherwise be allowed to make sure that member has some time to speak to Bill 79, assuming that he lets me know in time that I've reached that 25 minutes, so I'm counting on him.

It's going to be voted on. Once again, Ms Boyd, who is our critic for justice, speaking on second reading and just earlier today on third reading, has articulated the position of the New Democratic Party caucus. We're going to support Bill 79. We're going to vote for it.

When I heard the parliamentary assistant stand up in response to the member for Timiskaming — the member for Timiskaming, notwithstanding his concerns, had indicated that he was supportive of the bill. I hope the parliamentary assistant doesn't take some of my comments the wrong way. I know I have to be cautious. I know you may not believe this, Speaker, but yesterday — this is a brave new world; the learning curve is a tremendously steep one — I got dinged for saying "bull feathers." That was ruled unparliamentary. I thought it was that old Marx Brothers movie but I realized that was horse feathers, not bull feathers. I said, what about BS? Well, BS was ruled out of order as well. I'm thinking, my God, I'm being muzzled here. This surely can't be a democracy when you can't even say BS in the right or appropriate circumstances. Please bear with me, because we're learning here, and demonstrate the patience you usually do if in the course of commenting on Bill 79 I

find myself crossing that murky line as to what's acceptable and what's not acceptable language.

The thrust of the bill is the creation of masters. Their purpose will be to deal with preliminary matters and also with case management, as I understand the bill, in an effort to accelerate cases through the system.

As well, there's been much comment on the change of the names of the courts. There has been comment about the cost of changing signs. It's not just the exterior signs outdoors; there are the indoor signs and the mastheads on all the billboards and so on. I suppose somebody's ego is being addressed by virtue of the change of names, and who am I to interrupt the nurturing of the appetite of egos, be they of the bench or others in our province?

As well, there is the change of the titles of address to judges. I had always felt that at the end of the day "Judge" would be — I know that's somewhat American, but "Judge" addresses the issue of gender. It addresses the issue of — there's been a movement towards secularization of the courts. You're aware of it. I know some of the others here are. There was a time even in the Ministry of the Attorney General, in the design of courtrooms, where Superior Court judges had to have bigger offices than General Division judges, and General Division judges had to have bigger offices than Provincial Division judges, and should that ever not happen, boy, shorts got in a knot. But there's been a secularization in the Ministry of the Attorney General, and not without some protest, as I'm told merely by anecdote, on the part of some Superior Court judges. There's been a secularization and apparently all judges' offices in new courtroom design are the same size.

I understand that here we're universalizing the title that judges utilize. Again, to me, and I'm convinced to most of the people in Welland-Thorold, it's neither here nor there. Nor is the name of the courts to most people in Welland-Thorold either here or there. It's something that's not going to affect or impact on their lives in any meaningful or significant way. I assume that judges have been consulted and I assume that judges are happy with this. I suspect that if there are judges who aren't happy, it's the Superior Court judges whose noses are out of joint because the lower judges, the provincial appointments, will now be addressed in the same manner as those Superior Court judges, who make a heck of a lot more money than provincially appointed judges and, according to provincial judges, do a lot less work. But then you speak to a federally appointed judge and of course she or he will adamantly deny it.

I accept all that. I will be voting with the rest of the caucus in favour of Bill 79. Again, I understand that the recommendation given effect to comes out of the report commissioned by the former Attorney General, Marion Boyd, and addressed to her, and that's the first report of the Civil Justice Review, March 1995.

I'll tell you something that concerns me. It's a matter that's arisen in my constituency office month after month, year in, year out. I appreciate here that there's an attempt to use case management masters to accelerate matters through the civil process. Some people know that I'm a lawyer, and I concede, before anybody else accuses me of it, having no familiarity with civil law. I have no

experience in that area of law whatsoever. But I'll tell you what I have got experience in, and that's the frequent attendance at my office by people who were or are litigants with huge files, but the single most important piece of paper they bring to me is the account they have received from their lawyers. I'm inevitably astounded. The amount or size of the accounts being tendered by law firms to litigants never fails to shock me. The reason people are coming into my constituency office is because they've initiated litigation. To be fair, although the vast majority of litigation, according to the Civil Justice Review's first report, is breach of contract and not matrimonial, the vast majority of the concerns I have addressed to me are instances of matrimonial litigation — family law.

1720

I see accounts where litigants — again, whichever of the two spouses, husbands or wives, wives or husbands — have effectively had their pockets and bank accounts and RSPs and parents' savings accounts emptied, and who are then midway through litigation and left to hang and dry. Simply, the till is empty, the cupboard is bare, the piggy bank has no more change in it.

I've got to tell you that one of the problems, one of the concerns I have, and I hope it's shared by you, Speaker, is the cost of litigation. I note that in the review of March 1995 they did a survey of lawyers' fees. They indicate that for the lawyers who were surveyed — and the authors of the review insist that this is a reasonable cross-section of lawyers in Ontario, both in Toronto and outside of Toronto — the average fee is \$195 an hour. I don't quarrel with the fact that (1) lawyers are entitled to make money and (2) lawyers inevitably have overheads, like many professionals, overheads which aren't seen or at least not understood by their clientele. I understand that. Although I have no familiarity with civil law, I operated a small-town law practice for a number of years and hired people and knew what that cost, and bought supplies and paid for report services and libraries and so on.

I'm concerned because I note, and it's worthy of comment, that the legal profession, like at least a few other professions, is one wherein, notwithstanding its claims of high overhead, the pay that's paid to support staff is as often as not closer to minimum wage than any reasonable wage. While appreciating the concern expressed by lawyers about their overheads, I'm concerned as well about the fact that support staff for lawyers is not a particularly well-paid profession, and indeed one that's particularly important to the lawyer's practice.

Earlier comments by some of the members here in the House earlier today did a little bit of not inappropriate lawyer-bashing, talking about how lawyers can —

Laughter.

Mr Kormos: True — can prolong litigation, can keep things on the back burner.

Mr Baird: Name names.

Mr Kormos: A few of them are probably sitting in the Tory benches.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Peter, we are all around you.

Mr Kormos: My Tory colleagues would know better than I would. Far be it for me to point the finger. Don't

shoot the messenger. I only know what people tell me in my constituency office. I only see the tragic net result of the lawyer who's emptied the pockets and bank accounts of a litigant who puts their future in that lawyer's hands, who entrusts that lawyer with the rest of their life and who ends up with their file in hand when the money has run out. Inevitably, you see, it was a matter of saying, "Don't worry." That's what lawyers of that ilk inevitably tell their clients, "Don't worry." Then they want to know how much you have in your savings account and how much you have in RSPs.

I'll tell you what I'm concerned about. I suppose, because I know in the Tory benches there are more than a few lawyers who continue to practice, notwithstanding being members of the provincial Legislature, one might refer clientele to them because they have MPPs' income and surely they would be prepared to charge lower fees than other private practitioners. After all, the taxpayer is footing the bill to the tune of at least 78 grand a year, and I would expect the lawyers who are practitioners among the Tory benches to take on clients for a fraction of the average fee of \$195. By God, I'd expect more than a few of them to take on pro bono cases.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: That's the pro bono work. Listen to the howls of protest from the Tory backbenchers.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): What is that word? What does that mean?

Mr Kormos: Pro bono means fulfilling and meeting your professional responsibilities and serving your community when there's a cry for your skill or for your help, without the criteria of charging usurious fees.

So the case master system does exactly what it purports to do. The Attorney General may well have published data giving some illustrations about what type of acceleration through the system it's designed to achieve, but I'm not aware of any illustrations that are specific, for instance, using half a dozen cases of a variety of types: breach of contract, which the Civil Justice Review tells us are the most frequent sort of cases, or matrimonial. In the absence of that kind of data, it's hard to say how meaningful the appointment of masters is going to be.

I should join in the criticism of the manner of appointment because we have a return here to pork-barrelling that's the old-fashioned, Bill Davis-John Robarts way of doing things.

Mr Baird: What about Bob Rae?

Mr Kormos: Somebody said, "What about Bob Rae?" Well, Bob Rae never got an appointment. He's working for an expensive law firm downtown; he's paying his own freight. So why these people are concerned about Bob Rae beats me.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr Kormos: But the fact is that it's a return to old-time pork-barrelling of the very worst type. The fact is that over the course of the last two governments — and credit has to be given to Ian Scott in this regard. Ian Scott was certainly a leader among attorneys general in this province, and it was an approach and a style that was

maintained and developed upon by Howie Hampton and Marion Boyd subsequent to him.

Why Speaker, my Speaker has now turned into Ms Churley. The metamorphosis of Speakers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Riverdale.

Mr Kormos: Ms Churley, the member for Riverdale. But her friends call her Ms Churley, the member for Riverdale.

But we were trying to address the issue of pork-barrelling. The fact that a relatively —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You wrote the book on it.

Mr Kormos: Now, Speaker, it doesn't rank with horse feathers or bull feathers. We're talking pork-barrelling. Please, there's nothing scatological about pork-barrelling, by any stretch of the imagination. So here we go. We're talking about pork-barrelling of a type that's been unseen in this province for a good number of years.

The system for appointment of members of the bench has been, as I say, initiated by Ian Scott and the Liberal government of the accord, so I suppose New Democrats take some credit for that; developed and maintained and made sophisticated under the tenures of attorneys general Howie Hampton and Marion Boyd, and I think it's served us well.

My assessment of the bench in this province — and I'll throw in federal appointments as well — is that this province is blessed with a bench of superior quality. Earlier Mr Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and The Islands, had to suck up to Small Claims Court judges; I suppose some could accuse me of merely sucking up to provincially and federally appointed judges. But I'll say it again: The province enjoys a bench that's of an unrivalled quality.

The provincial appointments are appointments that take place —

Mr Gerretsen: One hundred and thirty bucks a day; that's all they made.

Mr Kormos: Mr Gerretsen's commenting on what the judges get paid in Small Claims Court. How much is that?

Mr Gerretsen: A hundred and thirty bucks.

Mr Kormos: One hundred and thirty dollars a day. Haven't they ever heard that you get what you pay for? Maybe that's the problem. In days gone by I've had trouble from time to time with Small Claims Court judges. Had I known that, I would have been an advocate of higher pay. But I understand Mr Gerretsen himself has from time to time been a rent-a-judge in Small Claims Court, and he'll speak to that in his own right and on his own time.

1730

There was nothing entirely inappropriate. In fact, everything indicates that the type of screening system and system of assessing qualifications that had been developed over the last 10 years served the judicial system well, served the community well. For the Attorney General in this instance to omit that from this legislation — it was pointed out to him during the course of and after second reading, and no amendments were forthcoming; it's being pointed out to him again. It's the sort of thing that's been pointed out to him since the birth

of this legislation, and the government has clearly refused to introduce an amendment that would submit case management masters to the same sort of screening and test of qualifications as other provincial appointments to the judiciary.

That leads to the inevitable conclusion, as so many have stated it, that this is designed to be a depository, like so many other unfettered appointments by the Tories, for failed Tory candidates. I suppose there's some message inherent in this, but this is the contradiction. You Tory backbenchers don't understand it because you know that more than a few of you are going to be tossed out of your seats come the next election. You don't get it. When you're tossed out of your seats it's not as if you're going to be able to line up for these appointments, because you're not going to be in government any more either. You're going to have to depend upon the largess of Howie Hampton and his cabinet come 1999. I'd suggest that you start placating him now, or for the few of you who might be qualified to assume such a position, be prepared to submit to a hiring and appointments procedure akin to the one that's been developed over the course of the last decade.

When I make note of the determination by the Civil Justice Review of the average fees charged by lawyers, and they are determined to be \$195 an hour, I also make note of the observation made by that review. It says, "In addition, we believe that the profession" — the legal profession — "needs to re-examine the way in which it charges its clients for the services it renders." I think that's a point well made. The recommendation is this: "We" — the panel authoring this review and this report — "recommend that a working group be established in conjunction with the Law Society of Upper Canada for the purpose of addressing the issues involving legal fees and making recommendations to the Civil Justice Review in that regard for purposes of this report."

Masters alone are not going to enhance the accessibility of our civil courts to the types of folks in each and every one of our ridings, be they 130 ridings or 103 or 73 or however many. The fact is that litigation is an incredibly expensive exercise that most litigants simply cannot enter into.

I have coming into my constituency office in Welland-Thorold on a regular basis people who have been ripped off, scammed, what have you, and I've prevailed upon counsel in the community to do pro bono work for them, people like Brenda Harlen, with her law office down at the south end of King Street, a bright young lawyer with long-time family roots in Welland. Brenda has taken on a number of cases at my request pro bono — matrimonial, Small Claims Court cases — and she's done an exceptional job with them. She's an outstanding lawyer. Dianne Grenier is yet another to whom I've referred a number of cases. She's over at the Seaway Mall on Niagara Street, an excellent lawyer. Dianne Grenier has taken on a number of cases that I've asked her to, recognizing that these are litigants who appear in my office, these are people who appear in my office —

Mr Tilson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have been listening to the member for Welland-Thorold's comments, and I think he's hardly referred to this bill at

all. Now he's talking about all his pals back in his riding, and he's running off talking —

The Speaker: Order. I have listened carefully and the member for Welland-Thorold has occasionally come back and mentioned the bill. I ask him to continue.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. As it was, I was talking about two outstanding members of the bar in this province, Brenda Harlen, from the south end of King Street, 683 King Street in Welland, down at the corner of King and Ontario Road, and Dianne Grenier, over at the Seaway Mall on Niagara Street in Welland, both of whom I've imposed on to take on cases that have come into my office.

Most recently Dianne Grenier, Seaway Mall in Welland, acted pro bono on behalf of a senior couple who had been ripped off bad by a concrete firm that had poured a concrete pad, charging them, it was incredible, \$7,000 or \$8,000. They didn't use adequate reinforcing rod, used the wrong grade of stone underneath the concrete. They came to me, and once again I tell you, I have no expertise in that kind of litigation. I prevailed upon Dianne —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Precisely. Bill 79 and expediting matters through the court and inaccessibility to the court system and the fact that case management masters are not the sole answer; that that in itself is inadequate; that we're not addressing some of the real gut problem here.

I was telling you about these folks from Welland South and their driveway. They got ripped off bad. But Dianne Grenier and I were capable of organizing a team. I got Eli Katch, from Crowland Avenue. Eli has been pouring concrete in Welland for 55 years. Eli is semiretired now, doesn't do the work; he'll supervise the jobs. Eli, pro bono again, went out and inspected the place over in Welland South, did an affidavit, because it was Small Claims Court, indicating his opinion. He's well known. Eli Katch was the master of concrete, still is, down in Welland — Crowland really, because he lives on the Crowland side of Crowland Avenue. It was only annexed into Welland in 1957. People in Crowland — that's where I was born and grew up, in Crowland. I'm not really a Wellander; I'm a Crowlandite. But Eli contributed his expertise, yes, pro bono.

Dianne permitted us to use her lawyering skills pro bono, was successful in Small Claims Court. Ah, but here's the rub: She got a judgement. Mr Gerretsen, from time to time the rent-a-judge, knows exactly what I mean. She got the judgement for these folks. What does she do with it then? Then these folks are embarking on a tortuous course of paying fee after fee after fee — and I know, I'll do it for you: The previous government increased fees too. There, are you happy? Yes, the previous government increased fees too. But I tell you, one of the ways of addressing accessibility and speed of process in the system, especially with Small Claims Court, is addressing the reality of the fees.

So here we are. These folks are now embarked on the second stage of their struggle, and that is tracking down whatever assets this clown who did the contracting for them and ripped them off in the first place might have hidden away.

I ask the Attorney General this. I say that there is a problem that's far greater than one of case management and one of utilizing masters in terms of making sure cases get through the courts in a speedy and efficient manner. I think one of the considerations is access to the courts in the first instance and certainly access to counsel.

1740

One of the things this government has embarked on doing that's a major impediment in that regard is the staffing of courts, the staffing of court offices. Again, I know we are not dealing here with criminal courts, but the staff in court offices, be they criminal courts or the civil courts, has been put under increased and exceptional workloads, increasingly burdensome, which makes their job all that much more difficult and at the end of the day is inevitably going to impact on efficiencies they would be able to obtain in their own right.

So here we are. I regret having utilized the modest period of time that we're permitted to use here, but I am pleased to have been able to speak about the legal expertise of Brenda Harlen in Welland and of Dianne Grenier.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: One of the Tory backbenchers wants to know how to spell her name. It's H-A-R-L-E-N, a great young woman who's a brilliant young lawyer and is partners with Mark Evans, who's the criminal practitioner, the outstanding criminal lawyer down on King, and Dianne Grenier, both of whom, yes, in the best tradition of the bar have done pro bono work for referrals from my office.

I should close just on this. I know there's more than a few Tory backbenchers who continue to practise law virtually full-time. They keep their offices going. In view of the fact that they're earning wages starting at \$78,000 a year, many of them, plus when you throw in the little pluses, I would suggest to people —

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): What did you do, Peter?

Mr Kormos: They'd better be careful, because if they ask questions, they're liable to get answers. I would suggest that people across this province go to lawyers who are MPPs and say to them: "Look, I'm already paying your salary. Why are you going to charge me \$195 an hour? Why are you going to charge me \$100? Why \$50? I tell you what, I'll pay the disbursements." That's what people in communities across Ontario should be saying to their MPPs who are also active, practising lawyers: "I'll pay the disbursements because I'm already paying your salary."

If the Tory backbenchers were in any way enthusiastic or serious about real folk getting access to justice, why, they'd be using this opportunity in their careers, because it's a relatively brief one, their incomes as MPPs, to enable them, yes, to do pro bono work for clients, certainly those who are worthy. If Conrad Black shows up at your door and asks for free work, tell him to hit the road. Tell him, "You have Babs come in here and cut a cheque because there's no way Connie Black is getting free legal work." But when folks like the folks in Welland-Thorold who have been ripped off, who have been scammed, who need help in the system come to you, give them a break. They deserve that much.

Thank you kindly, Speaker. You've been most generous with your absence of rulings on my comments today. I was almost going to say "horse feathers," but I declined.

The Speaker: Thank you, the member for Welland-Thorold. Thank you for the compliment, and I'm sure the member for Kingston and The Islands is very happy you didn't use your whole half-hour as you promised.

Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: I will just make this comment quickly. The member for Welland-Thorold talked about how there are many fees that are going to start to be charged by the courts that weren't charged before, and some of those fees are going up.

I listened intently as some of the government members heckled on the other side and talked about fees that were increased at the time we were the government. But I would say to the members across the way, I'd be very careful about throwing a stone on that particular issue because I can tell you that across the province of Ontario, municipalities, school boards, hospitals, you name it, are going to be raising user fees and licensing fees at every opportunity in order to be able to deal with the government's expenditure reductions that they have going on.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Tory user fees.

Mr Bisson: Tory user fees. A good example: In the township of Vaughan, because the member raised it in the debate, the Minister of Transportation on the one hand is trying to deregulate the trucking industry and trying to remove some of the licensing requirements legislated under the law. In the township of Vaughan, that municipality is increasing licensing fees to truckers, individual trucks, on drivers and on companies. For companies that have five or six or 10 trucks, it's significant amounts of money. We're talking in the tens of thousands of dollars.

So when the members across the way are somewhat sensitive to the issue that the member for Welland-Thorold raised about user fees being charged by the courts with regard to increased fees that will be charged because of expenditure reduction, be aware that because of what this government is doing a lot of people out there in regard to municipalities etc, who have had their transfers cut by the government, are going to be raising those fees to a level we have never seen before. It doesn't do us a lot of good. The taxpayer got a bit of a tax break from the Minister of Finance in the one pocket, but coming out of the other pocket is not only the wallet; they're pulling out the entire lining of the pocket in user fees passed on because of the cuts this government is going forward with. There's no gain in this particular move.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the opportunity. I know I've got two minutes, but I want to defer to Mr Gerretsen, please.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: There are some comments I want to make about this bill and about the state of the system of justice in Ontario in general. The government has a responsibility here, as do the law society and the lawyers who practise in this province, to first of all demystify for

the general public the whole legal system and the court system we've got operating in this province. It's never been in the self-interest of the legal profession to do this, quite frankly. If there's a certain cloud or a certain mysticism about the whole process, people will be more inclined to use lawyers etc, but I really think the time has come when we've got to demystify the system we operate in.

You're not going to do that just by changing the name of the courts at this stage. I can tell you from practical experience that most people haven't got a clue as to what court they're going into. All they know is if it's criminal court or not criminal court. If they've had any experience with the criminal justice system, they usually know where the criminal court in any municipality is located, but they don't know where the other courthouse is located. Whether you call it the Court of Justice or give it any other name, to them it's still "the courthouse."

It's the same thing with the way in which judges are addressed. It doesn't matter whether you call them "Your Honour," "Your Worship," "Mr Justice," "Madam Justice" etc. To the average person those people are judges, and they just call them "Judge." I would think that with another name change that's now being imposed, once again, we're only making it worse for the average member of the general public. Let's face it, most of the people probably only deal with the legal system, as far as being in court is concerned, once or twice in their lifetime, if that often. I don't think we're doing anything in this bill that will make it easier for them.

Kind of interesting is a quote that was in one of the local newspapers recently. I'll just read this to you: "In an interview yesterday, Barbara Krever, a spokesperson for the Attorney General's ministry, acknowledged that a desire to restore the court's pre-merger moniker played some role in the change." She states, "The new name better reflects the traditional name of the superior court," and she added that some judges felt the old names were confusing. If the judges feel that the names are confusing, can you imagine how the general public feels about it?

To spend money on changing the names of all the different courts and by putting up new plaques identifying their new names etc is a waste of the taxpayers' money. I understand that a change will cost something like \$2.5 million. There's been some suggestion made that we will not be changing the names of some of the courthouses or court offices until it's actually required to be done after the nameplates have worn out etc. We will have a province now with about four or five different names that different courthouses will be known by. Can you imagine how confusing that will be to the general public?

The other thing I wanted to briefly touch on is this appointment of the masters. The intent here is to speed the cases along quicker. I totally agree that the speed with which most civil cases have been moved along in the past is totally unacceptable, especially when you look at the fact — and I looked at some statistics here that stated that — it can now take a civil case as long as five years to make its way through the court system. That's certainly true, and it can take much longer than that as well, but the average cost of taking a case in the civil

court system is \$38,000. That's totally unacceptable, and if we can speed the process along so much the better.

1750

Having said that, I think it's also fair to say that in the existing system some judges in assignment courts were able to move the system along quite quickly who gave one side or the other, once it was ready to go to trial, perhaps one further adjournment and then said, "You're either ready to go with your trial on a particular day or forget about it." Not all judges adhere to that system, and we all know that in some cases in assignment court it was easier to get adjournments than in other cases. It's to be hoped that with this new case management master system that's being contemplated to be part of the legislation the process will be speeded along.

I have some concerns as to how these people will be appointed. I would like to see a system in which the local bar association will be asked for their comment not so much on the qualification of different people who may apply for these positions but how they are regarded from a practical viewpoint in their communities, because I think these new positions will be very practically oriented. It's my understanding that it will not be so much about how much law these masters know but about how quickly they can move the process along. In that case knowledge of the law may not be all that necessary. What is much more important is whether people are going to be appointed to these positions who will take a very practical approach to it and get cases moved along.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): He's just going to use that word irregardless of what you say. There's no such word as "irregardless" either.

Mr Gerretsen: Is that right? I'm certainly glad to see the members opposite have woken up from their afternoon siesta and are now ready to contribute to the debate, particularly since it's almost time to vote on the bill and leave.

There is one other situation I talked about a little bit earlier that I want to go back to: the limits of the Small Claims Court. We know that for years the limit in most of Ontario was \$1,000, and I believe it was \$3,000 here in Metropolitan Toronto. For years individuals, not necessarily the law society, have been asking to have this limit increased. It was increased about four or five years ago when the limit in Small Claims Court outside the Metropolitan area was increased to \$6,000, and I believe in Metro it's \$10,000. Let me tell you from a very practical viewpoint that the speed with which matters were resolved for individuals involved in having trials in that system, as a result of the increased limits the justice that was dispensed, obviously not always to everyone's satisfaction, was greatly improved. It was always difficult, from a very practical viewpoint, to explain to individuals why a \$3,000 or a \$4,000 case in the olden days would take two or three years to resolve, would require discoveries and all sorts of other interpleader motions before the matter actually got to court; then if it wasn't settled and actually went to court, quite often the expense involved in having this matter heard was two or three times the amount the actual claim was worth, which was absolute nonsense as far as I was concerned.

By increasing the limits to Small Claims Court most of these cases can be resolved in a matter of two or three months, which I believe is the average time it takes from initiating a case to having it heard by a Small Claims Court judge. I think that generally speaking the public is much better served. Yes, there will be the odd situation, as has already been indicated by the member for Welland-Thorold, that perhaps the quality of justice that was dispensed may, in the opinion of —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the members to come to order. The member for Welland-Thorold, I noticed the House was listening very intently when you spoke, and the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Kormos: I was listening to him, Speaker.

The Speaker: You may well have been. It's difficult to talk and listen. I'm certain you could do it.

I ask the member for Kingston and The Islands to continue.

Mr Gerretsen: I was going to say something very complimentary about that member, but I will cease and desist from doing so at this stage because he obviously was not listening with the same intent we all gave him when he was speaking a little earlier.

The point simply is that if the Small Claims Court limit were increased, the general public, which may at times be involved with that system, would be much better served. This is something that perhaps the Attorney General's department can take another look at. I know there will be certain pressures from within the legal community and the law society that may very well be opposed to this, but we ought to look at not so much what serves the legal society best but what serves the general public of Ontario the best. That should always be the final matter taken into account.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): It's okay, you can quit now.

Mr Gerretsen: No, I won't quit, because I have to say something here about the \$120 million in cuts the Attorney General has made to the justice system. We already know that has cost 606 jobs in the Ministry of the Attorney General. That amounts to \$60 million worth of the cuts. We also know that 70 crown attorneys have been cut, which is 15% of the total prosecutors in this province. I guess what that really all boils down to is that whereas, on the one hand, within the civil system we are in effect speeding up the process by having these case management masters, in the criminal system we are delaying the process because there simply aren't as many prosecutors available to do their jobs and move the criminal system of justice along as quickly as was the case beforehand. I understand, for example, that the government has not replaced the 20 crown attorneys who were lost through attrition this year, and we've got every indication that this will continue.

In summing up, let me just say that whereas the appearances are here that the system of civil justice in this province will be expedited, whatever has been gained in that aspect has been more than lost on the criminal side, where in effect the number of crown attorneys available to prosecute the various cases that come before

the court system are simply no longer available to the system.

The Speaker: Mr Tilson has moved third reading of Bill 79. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Cochrane South has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given today by the Chair of Management Board. The member has five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The question that was put today is actually quite a simple one. The government last fall released the contract I have here in the House today. It's the area maintenance contract for the snow removal and summer maintenance of the highway system in the area of Chatham.

When it was announced that the contract was being awarded, and prior to the tendering process, it was said by the government, it was said by the Minister of Transportation, that this was going to be a pilot project, that this particular contract would be won, it would be awarded, and then they would give it some time to work itself out. The ministry would then evaluate the pilot project to see: Does it work? Does it not work? Are there savings for the government? Are there not? Are there ways of making it better etc? Only at that point would the government move forward to look at the possibility of going to further moves of privatization.

We found out yesterday that the Minister of Transportation, none other than the Honourable Al Palladini, released six new area maintenance contract bid tenders, which begs a person to ask the question: If the first one was supposed to be a pilot, why are we out there releasing six new contracts afterwards? It's rumoured, by what we're hearing within the Ministry of Transportation, that within a three-year period the entire Ministry of Transportation road maintenance, summer and winter, is going to be done by private sector contractors and no longer carried out by the Ministry of Transportation.

The first part of the question was: "How can the government go forward with this without any attempt to look at what are the consequences for the taxpayers of Ontario?" Clearly there hasn't been any of that that's happened, because the first contract hasn't even started yet and the government has already announced it's going to go forward and do a number of other contracts over a short period of time.

The second part of the question I asked the minister, and this is really where I take exception, was, "Listen, under what reports, under what studies, under what kind

of documentation can you prove to us, the taxpayers of this province, that privatizing these particular highway maintenance contracts is going to save taxpayer dollars?" The minister said, "Well, we're going to save \$5 million," but he never came back and told us what reports showed him that.

We know for a fact that in areas where there has been privatization of winter and summer road maintenance — in British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, and in the northern states of the United States — all the reports that have been done on those attempts to privatize, which have been in place for a time, have proved that it is cheaper for the Ministry of Transportation to do it itself with the use of contractors balanced off against having some Ministry of Transportation employees.

In the case of British Columbia, they found that when it was originally announced that they were going to go forward with privatization some years ago, they were going to supposedly save the taxpayers of the province anywhere from \$100 million to \$160 million over the period of the contracts. By that mark, they went forward and introduced privatization in BC. We found out five years after the fact, when the study was finally done, that it didn't save the taxpayers of BC any money; it cost them an additional \$100 million.

The same is the case in Quebec. The same is the case in the northern states. In every case where they've privatized the entire ministry of transportation maintenance staff, it has resulted in higher costs to the taxpayers. So I said to the minister, "Why is it you're going forward with this without any kind of review, without any attempt to look at and quantify what the savings are going to be to the taxpayer?"

I then brought to the minister's attention a report that was done by the Ministry of Transportation — it's entitled Highway Operations and Maintenance Program Review, Final Report, dated May 1994 — when we were in government. We asked the Ministry of Transportation: "Is there something you can do within the Ministry of Transportation that will save money? Look at all of the options, including privatization." We said to them: "You have to look at all the options. You just can't look at one; you have to look at them all."

The Ministry of Transportation, the people who know this best, went out and looked at all the areas that had been privatized, as I said, contained in this particular report dated May 1994, and as a result made a final report. Their final report said simply this: "Total contracting of the highway maintenance operation is not appropriate even if only for the fundamental reason that it does not generate significant economic savings."

If the Ministry of Transportation people themselves found fit in 1994 to say that it doesn't pay to privatize, that you have to have a balance between private contractors such as we have and ministry employees, what brings the government to the point of coming to the conclusion that the entire privatization made sense economically? I await the minister's response on that question.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I will attempt, in the absence of the Minister of Transporta-

tion, to respond as adequately as I can. The member for Cochrane South has referred to a report. I believe he's referring to the Highway Operations and Maintenance Program Review. I see him nodding his head. I'm informed by the Ministry of Transportation, to start with, that this particular review is several years old and did not examine the benefits of area maintenance contracts, so that the staff feel that it was not a fair assessment of the initiatives now under way by the Ministry of Transportation. That's my response to that particular aspect.

In general, I will say that the Ministry of Transportation has reviewed this matter, I believe, quite thoroughly from the point of view of their business plans. They've also looked at the kind of reports they've received from British Columbia — the member for Cochrane South particularly mentioned British Columbia — and also an initiative in Alberta. So they have studied this very recently from other jurisdictions, as well as the business plans. They believe from all the evidence they have that there will be a saving to the taxpayer and it could be in the 7% to 11% vicinity.

In terms of the first pilot project, the one in the Chatham area, the sort of saving that apparently has been achieved through the RFP, or request for proposal, is in the area of almost \$1 million over a three-year period. That is comparing the same level of work that the private sector would achieve as the public sector has at the present time, so comparing the same level of work, about \$1 million. The question has come up, if that sort of work changes, then wouldn't that affect one system more than the other? It's not our belief that it would. We feel that is a fair comparison.

A question comes up with regard to whether we should wait to implement further pilot projects or further work, not having proceeded very far down the Chatham test project. The ministry does feel that the very fact of going through the RFP has contributed significantly to their understanding. Now, we don't actually see the work on the road — the member is wagging his finger at me — and that indeed is true, but just the fact of having gone through the RFP in the Chatham area has assisted them greatly in understanding.

This particular proposal that the minister has just issued has different components to it. It has an outsourcing component, which involves some 2,000 kilometres, I believe, but it also has what they call a managed outsourcing component. The managed outsourcing component retains the administrative overseeing functions, let's say, of the Ministry of Transportation to a greater degree, the day-to-day supervisory functions, perhaps you might term them, of the Ministry of Transportation. That will be over an area of some 5,000 kilometres, and that's different from the Chatham proposal. It'll also allow for smaller contractors to be involved. Smaller contractors are quite involved in the —

Mr Bisson: Presently.

Hon David Johnson: Presently, yes. I think some 60% of the winter maintenance, some 50% of the summer maintenance, so their contribution is excellent. But what we're attempting to do is raise that level of participation through either outsourcing or managed outsourcing over

a broader period of time and over a broader area, in some cases, I guess, close to 100%, and the managed outsourcing may be less than 100%. By doing this, the staff in their analysis believe we can save in the vicinity of 7% to 11%, which will represent some \$4 million to \$5 million across the province.

The guideline we have endorsed up to this point is that if there isn't at least a saving of 5%, then we're not going ahead with it at that point; it would have to come back

for further scrutiny. If the saving is more than 5%, then they'll be implementing; under 5%, we'll say: "Stop. Have another look at it. Is this really the way we want to go?"

I guess with that, Mr Speaker, my time has run out.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It being after 6 of the clock, I deem the House be adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L)
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Cooke, David S. (ND)
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York Mills	Tumbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Mercredi 30 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Once again we have an example of Mike Harris promoting his policies of intolerance and divisiveness. In responding to media questions about groups participating in last weekend's days of protest, the Premier said, "If you saw the banners going by from some of the Communist parties, as I saw, and I guess the Iraqi group (and) Iranian group."

It is incomprehensible that the Premier of this province would have the audacity to make racist remarks when speaking about groups and organizations protesting against his government's policies. The Premier has shown that he does not understand this great country.

Every single person in this room, every person in this province and this entire country is from a family whose ancestors were immigrants to this land. As Canadian citizens we celebrate our heritage but we are proud Canadians. For the Premier to utter racist views towards people who are building new lives in this province is a slap in the face, an insult to all of us. We came to this country to make better lives for our families, yet the leader of the largest province in Canada believes, through his remarks, that it is acceptable to promote racist views.

My constituents in the riding of Oriole and people right across this province are outraged. The Premier owes an apology to everyone in this province. I demand that the Premier stand in his place today and offer an apology to the people of Ontario and specifically to my constituents in the riding of Oriole who are offended by his remarks.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Oriole, I listened to your statement and I think there were some parts in it that I found offensive and unparliamentary.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Well, we found his comments pretty offensive.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, come to order.

I appreciate that I allowed you to finish, but I would ask that you withdraw the remarks about the Premier making racist remarks.

Mrs Caplan: Mr Speaker, the concern I have is I don't know what other word to use to describe —

The Speaker: The member for Oriole, I'm not here to debate — the member for Oriole, take your seat, please. I'm not here to debate the issue with you. The fact of the

matter remains that you said the Premier was making racist remarks.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): They were racist comments.

The Speaker: I'll have to deal with the member for Welland-Thorold later. The fact of the matter remains it's unparliamentary. You cannot suggest someone in here is a racist or makes racist remarks.

Mr Kormos: What would you call a racist then? What kind of language would you —

Mrs Caplan: With due respect, I did not call the Premier a racist. I did say that his remarks were racist.

The Speaker: That's splitting hairs, in my opinion.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): It is not. There is a very substantial difference

The Speaker: No, it is not very substantive at all. The fact of the matter is you cannot claim that a member of this Legislature is making racist remarks. The fact remains it's unparliamentary. I ask the member for Oriole to withdraw.

Mrs Caplan: Mr Speaker, I would suggest to you that it is unparliamentary for the leader of this government to make racist remarks.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole, this is your last chance. You have the opportunity to withdraw or I will name the member for Oriole.

Mr Silipo: On a point of order —

The Speaker: Not right now. Your decision is —

Mrs Caplan: Mr Speaker, I believe the Premier's statements were racist.

The Speaker: That's fine. I will name the member for Oriole, Elinor Caplan, then. Would the member please leave the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm asking you to leave the chamber, the member for Oriole. You've been named.

Mrs Caplan: No, I won't.

Mrs Caplan was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: I'm not finished. The member for Welland-Thorold, I ask you to withdraw those comments that you made.

Mr Kormos: I concur with the member from Oriole.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Please take your seat.

Mr Kormos: That's racist where I come from.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, please take your seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, the last opportunity to take your seat. I'm not going to listen to a speech. The suggestion is very clear from the Chair: I consider the remarks unparliamentary. You can with-

draw them or not withdraw; that's your choice. I suggest that you make it right now. Are you going to withdraw?

Mr Kormos: You're making a climate where people can engage in racist comments —

The Speaker: I ask the member for Welland-Thorold to leave the chamber. I name the member for Welland-Thorold, Mr Kormos.

Mr Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Silipo: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It seems to me that probably without intentions on anybody's part we have come upon a pretty substantive issue here today in the actions that have just taken place. I have to tell you, sir, that I am troubled by the approach you are taking. I'm obviously not in a position to question your ruling and I'm not doing that.

The Speaker: Can I hear your point of order?

Mr Silipo: My point of order is that I think it's important, sir, that you clarify for this House the parameters that you are going to use to determine what is parliamentary and what isn't parliamentary. If I can just go —

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, I heard your point of order. I'd appreciate it if you could take your seat. I will address your point of order.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Let him finish.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Windsor-Riverside, I heard his point of order. I will give you —

Mr Cooke: You get allowed to finish in this place.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside, the point of order is not in order at this point in time. What I will say to the member for Dovercourt is, I appreciate the fact that every Speaker has different terms and acceptable levels of debate in this place, and each Speaker must let those levels find their own course. What I am suggesting to the members of this Legislature on both sides, charging another member of this House with being a racist in my opinion is unparliamentary.

I understand that you may disagree with that ruling. I understand that you may not appreciate that ruling. But the fact remains, the member for Dovercourt, I find it unparliamentary. I gave the member for Oriole a number of opportunities to withdraw. She chose not to. Now, you may not find it unparliamentary, but the important fact here is that I do. Those are my parameters and I have to stick with them.

1340

Mr Silipo: On a separate point of order, a different point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask you then, if a member of this Legislature were to stand up and say that a certain person outside the Legislature attributed comments to the Premier or to another person of this Legislature which they deemed to be racist, and so what the member is doing in standing in their place is relating comments that were made by someone else, would you, in your ruling, consider that to be parliamentary or unparliamentary?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): That's not a point of order. That's a hypothetical question.

The Speaker: First off, with all due respect to the member for Dovercourt, the question you're putting to me is exactly that, a hypothetical question at this point in

time. The fact remains that as of today it wasn't a question of someone else making the charge; it was a direct charge made by the member about the Premier. Member for Dovercourt, if you want to put hypothetical questions we could be here all day looking and searching for rulings, but the direct response put by the member for Oriole was that the Premier was a racist. All I'm saying is, that's just not parliamentary, and that's my position.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With all due respect, and I don't want to get bounced for this, I think it's a pretty substantive point of order. When you questioned the member for Oriole, she said she wasn't accusing the member of being a racist.

The Speaker: Order. I say to the member for Sudbury — please take your seat — we can go over this ground a number of times. From my seat and what I heard, it was very clear — the accusation, including the heckling that took place — that the member was specifically saying that. You may have heard something different, and I'm not going to tell you what you heard and didn't hear. What I heard was that direct accusation.

With all due respect to the members in this place, in my opinion, if I allow that, the decorum in this House would reduce to such a level that debate would be impossible. You must accept that fact. If that charge can be levelled against any one of you in this place and I don't step in and protect that individual, this place would be in a shambles within 10 minutes, so you must protect the right. That is a very vile word and it must be very well documented that the Speaker stand and protect those who accuse others of being racists. It's a dangerous word. I will not have it.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The difference in this case is that she said the remarks were racist; she did not say the Premier was a racist. There is a difference —

The Speaker: Order. I say to the member for St Catharines that I appreciate that's your point of view. In my opinion, and as I said to the member for Oriole, that's splitting hairs. It's splitting hairs. You have a point of privilege. I can take it up now or at the end of question period, if you'd like.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, on the point of privilege specifically: It is incumbent upon us to follow the standing orders of this Legislature, and I understand the point you're trying to make here, but we are also charged as legislators to set the example about how citizens of this province should be treated. In this particular case it appeared in the paper on Saturday that the Premier had made what was termed to be by others —

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, if you would make a concise point of order, I would greatly appreciate it. If you would directly get to the point and cite the order you're concerned with, I'd very much appreciate that.

Mr Bisson: I'm up on a point of privilege, and the point of privilege I'm trying to make is not a point of order. The privilege is that we, as members here, have to be respected by you, the Speaker. I don't want to quarrel with you but the point is that what the member for Oriole said was that it was alleged that there are certain people in our society who feel that the comments the Premier

made were racist comments, and that's what she was alluding to. She did not call the Premier a racist. What she was alluding to was a view of others within this province who —

The Speaker: Take your seat, member for Cochrane South. Again, I don't want to get into a long debate about this, but I sat here, I heard the phrase, I heard the heckles and I heard the process as it came about. I heard it very directly, to the member for Cochrane South. I understand I think as well as anyone in this place the fairness and evenhandedness of a Speaker, and I feel that I'm fair and evenhanded, but I can't stand for those words in this place.

Mr Bisson: Let me get to the point.

The Speaker: No, I believe you've made your point.

Mr Bisson: No, I —

The Speaker: Then finally, if you could make your point directly.

Mr Bisson: My point of privilege is that it is the responsibility of the Speaker to protect the members of this Legislature in regard to the minority, but it is also the responsibility of the Legislature to protect the minority within the province and that is what's going out the window today with that comment.

The Speaker: That's fine. Statements.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: You're going to have to give us some leeway here to make some remarks, because on the issue of privilege we are affected by what we can and cannot say. You argue, and I appreciate you argue as a Speaker, that what you heard are two different things; a number of other members are saying there's a difference between saying you, Speaker, are a racist versus what you say is racist, or you, Speaker, are stupid versus your remarks being stupid.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York, just take your seat. Member for Fort York, would you take your seat for a moment. At this point in time, and whether you agree or not, this entire occupation of points of order and privilege is debating a ruling. I made the ruling. If the member for Fort York has some very real concerns about my ruling, you can come and talk to me about it at any time. I will always talk to any member with respect to a ruling, clarification etc. But at this time in this place at this hour, I cannot continue to have members debate my ruling. The fact of the matter remains I made my ruling. I appreciate that some members may not agree with it.

Mr Marchese: You're limiting everything we can say, completely.

The Speaker: I would hardly suggest, to the member for Fort York, that by suggesting you can't use the word "racist" is limiting your ability to debate, so I will go —

Mr Marchese: There is a difference between —

The Speaker: Member for Fort York. I will go on. If you'd like to discuss this with me at a later date, I'm more than happy to talk to you about it, but right now I will not have any more challenges to my ruling.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): People across the province are becoming more and more vocal in their

opposition to what Mike Harris is doing. I can tell you that in my own riding of Dovercourt, just in the last week alone, I've been at two meetings — one last night and one the week before — focusing on education, on issues around prescription user fees for seniors, on rent control, on child care, on Hydro.

In each of these meetings the discussion that was going on was by people who were seeing through the Mike Harris agenda, people who were seeing that in effect the outrage that was expressed this weekend comes as a result of a government that is uncaring, of a government that is continuing to attack the most vulnerable, of a government that doesn't care about reducing the deficit, but cares more about putting more and more money and more and more power into the hands of the wealthy citizens and the most powerful citizens in this province.

And yes, Speaker, it's also become clear to me as I've been listening to people that one of the things people have been saying very clearly is that the attitude Mr Harris has been portraying, and particularly the comments he has been portraying, they believe are racist.

WALLY CROUTER

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): November 1, 1996, is an historic day. It marks the 50th anniversary of Wally Crouter as host of CFRB's morning show, making him the longest-running morning show host in North America. Recently voted the favourite morning man in Toronto, he's also been Toronto's number one rated radio morning host for 50 years.

Wally Crouter is the ultimate broadcaster and I'd like to add that he's been the one constant factor in Toronto's history since the end of the Second World War.

He shepherded the baby-boomers of this great province through infancy and has seen them become parents and grandparents. He's seen governments and political parties rise and fall. He's interviewed and socialized with more Ontario premiers than anybody, from Leslie Frost to Mike Harris. He's put his considerable talents to the task of raising funds for many charities, including the CFRB Children's Fund, the Variety Club, diabetes research, MS, Easter Seals, the Tim Horton Camp for youngsters and outfitting hockey teams in the Northwest Territories.

I know members of this Parliament join the people of Ontario in appreciation of the job Wally Crouter has done during this past half-century, and on behalf of this House and the people of Ontario I would like to take this opportunity to recognize an outstanding talent and consummate professional: Wally Crouter, a true and caring human being and a very rare and unrivalled broadcaster.

I call upon all members of this House to join me in saluting the signal contribution of Wally Crouter, a living treasure of Ontario.

1350

JEAN POIRIER

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Je désire exprimer la fierté que je partage avec tous les commettants et commettantes de la circonscription de Prescott et Russell suite à la nomination de l'ancien député de Prescott et Russell, Jean Poirier, au rang de chevalier de l'ordre national du Mérite de France.

Au fil des ans, notamment durant les 10 années qu'il a représenté la circonscription de Prescott et Russell ici même à Queen's Park, Jean Poirier s'est dévoué au nom de la francophonie. Il est juste de dire qu'une telle récompense pour les efforts qu'il a déployés est un honneur digne de ses convictions. Notons qu'au cours des dernières années, M. Poirier a été, entre autres, décoré du grade de commandeur de l'ordre de la Pléiade.

Je me joins donc aux citoyens de Prescott et Russell et à tous les francophones de l'Ontario pour offrir mes plus sincères félicitations à M. Poirier pour l'obtention de cette élogieuse distinction.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to bring to the attention of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing a document that was, in the last election, up front on the part of the Tories. It is the Common Sense Revolution, if you would remember.

In that Common Sense Revolution, you made a promise, Minister. You say: "Historically, municipalities have responded to provincial funding limits by simply increasing local property taxes. There may be numerous levels of government in this province, but there is only one level of taxpayer." You went on to promise that you would work closely with municipalities to ensure that any actions taken by your government would not result in local property taxes going up.

Well, Mr Minister, in the township of Matheson, because of the cuts in funding that you have done to their transfer payments, they are now moving to annex a number of townships in and around Black River-Matheson. It means that people living outside of the municipal boundaries that are affected, that are going to be annexed, are going to have their municipal taxes go up by 100% and 200%. It's not that Black River-Matheson wants to do this because they just feel good about it; it's because you leave them no choice. They're in a position because of your municipal cuts to transfer payments coming from the province that they have no room to move if they're going to maintain services in the community of Matheson. It means to say local cottagers will have increased taxes. The two local mines in my area will have their taxes go up.

Minister, you have broken one of the promises in the Common Sense Revolution. To boot, the tax cut that people have got has just gone out the door in the township of Black River-Matheson. I say, shame on you.

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I am wearing flowers in the House today to celebrate the city of Guelph's success as the 1996 champion for the Community in Bloom competition. This award has been announced by the Ontario Parks Association. Competitors from across Ontario were judged on community involvement and participation in planting, on neighbourhood beautification, on industrial landscape improvements and donations to city beautification. Turf appearance, park and street trees, downtown planters, hanging baskets and even neighbourhood diversity in landscaping were all judged.

The judges found Guelph to be a beautifully clean and well-maintained city. As well, our city was commended for its excellent waste recycling management operations, for which we're a world leader in the new wet-dry facility.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature that was significant in our success was the beautiful floral clock in Riverside Park that has been a must-see for visitors to Guelph for years.

It's my pleasure to congratulate all of those businesses, groups and community members who worked hard to make Guelph the 1996 winner of the Community in Bloom competition. From time to time, all of us in this House here think that our cities are the most beautiful. This time, Guelph's beauty has been duly recognized.

MEMBER FOR DURHAM EAST

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): When opposition MPPs receive feedback from their constituents that the Harris government is bad for Ontario, it galvanizes us even more to get our message through to the Harris government. But when a Tory MPP admits to his local paper that "the public is not being supportive enough of the Common Sense Revolution," I say, "Kudos to the people of Durham East."

The weekend Port Perry Star reported "O'Toole...hints he's already had enough," that "virtually all the feedback coming into his constituency office is negative and that he receives little encouragement from the people of Durham East," that "he receives constant complaints and zero encouragement." O'Toole finishes with, "I don't know why anyone would want the job." To that I say, "Bye, bye, O'Toole." It might serve the Tory MPP well to reconsider that his job is to represent the people of Durham East. The people of Durham East are saying that the Harris government is all wet. I also say we expect the member for Durham East to stand up for the people of Durham East. To the Premier I say, let's call a by-election.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Never has Ontario's health care system been in such chaos. Let me just explain some of the ingredients that have contributed to this chaos. We've had \$1.3 billion in cuts to hospitals. We've had layoffs of thousands of nurses in the province. We've had layoffs of thousands of support staff. We've had an absolute decrease in the quality of care for Ontarians. We've got a restructuring process under way for our hospitals which is completely unrelated to the \$1.3 billion in cuts. There's little community input. There are no human resource plans. There's no commitment from the province that there will be provincial capital. There are incredible demands on local communities to raise millions and millions of dollars which, to the three communities of Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Windsor, amounts so far to about \$500 or \$600 per household.

With respect to the doctors, we've got a minister who was provocative in the spring, threatened the doctors in the spring, made a tax on the doctors of the province. Doctors began withdrawing services. Then the minister

said he would sit down and negotiate. He took several weeks to set up a negotiating committee. Then he got a deal, and then the minister himself interfered with the ratification process. Now the doctors will turn down the agreement and again our system will be in further chaos.

The minister is incompetent, and he has presided over the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

WARDLAW, MULLIN, CARTER AND THWAITES

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to acknowledge a law firm in my riding of Dufferin-Peel that is celebrating 100 years of practice. The firm was formed in 1896 by John Island, a farmer's son whose family immigrated from Ireland and settled in Mono township in the county of Dufferin. John Island practised in Orangeville for 32 years until his death, after which time the practice was sold to Norman Wardlaw for \$1,600.

Norman was born in Chinguacousy township, within the town of Caledon. He struggled through the tough years of the Depression and at one point shared office space with another lawyer in town, H.B. Church. Norman served his country in the Second World War and returned to his practice in 1945. Norman's son James joined the practice in 1956 and became a partner immediately after being called to the bar.

James Wardlaw QC has been very active in the Canadian Bar Association, was elected a bencher of the law society in 1979 and became a life bencher in 1995. He was awarded a law society medal for services to the profession in 1994.

Geoffrey Mullin QC joined the firm in 1969, with the two partners being assisted by different lawyers over the years.

Terry Carter and David Thwaites joined the firm as partners, now known as Wardlaw, Mullin, Carter and Thwaites. This firm is the largest in Dufferin-Peel. Congratulations to the partners and associates Jim Wardlaw, Geoff Mullin, Terrance Carter, David Thwaites, Patricia Sproule Ward and Mervyn White.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In regard to the previous ruling, I'd like to add to the record so we understand the comments that were made by the member for Oriole.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Take your seat, please. First and foremost, I've made my ruling. Secondly, I caution the members, after a series of points of order, that any more points of order would be challenging the Chair. At this point in time, it would not be appropriate for me to hear what your comments are or put them on the record with respect to my ruling, because at this point in time I've made it. We're going to move on.

Mr Agostino: Can I ask you to review the comments that were made —

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat, please. I would make the same offer to the member for Fort York as I make to the member for Hamilton East: If you want to discuss any of these concerns or your concerns with the ruling with me after, I'd be more than happy to meet with

you. At this time, it's out of order for you to stand in your place and speak to those. I have no problem at all if you would like to discuss this in my office at a later date; I'll be happy to talk to you about it. But right now it's not even close to being appropriate or in order.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING (TORONTO)

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier, who I understand is expected in question period. If my understanding is not correct, I'll have to stand down my first question. I appreciate the moment to wait for the Premier to arrive. As you will realize, my first question is for the Premier.

Premier, this morning some two million people woke up to news that you are likely going to eliminate their local level of government in order to create a huge new bureaucracy to govern Metropolitan Toronto. Many were rather shocked that Mike Harris, the man who likes to talk about bringing government to the people, now believes that bigger and more remote government is better government.

Premier, your plans for this mega-Metro, a huge, nameless, faceless bureaucracy, run counter to everything you promised during the election. I want you to remember what your task force on Metro Toronto said about the existing cities within Metro, the very cities you're now planning to cut. I quote from the task force when it says, "The government closest to the people is considered the most responsive, efficient and accountable." Premier, what would make you disagree today with your own task force? What new information do you have that would make you want to throw out the Golden report and throw out your own task force report in favour of a mega-Metro, a giant new bureaucracy?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know what you're talking about, but maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs knows something.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I first want to state that no decision has been made as of yet. However, having said that, I can say that if that decision were to be made, it would be totally consistent with the Common Sense Revolution, as it would eliminate duplication and waste and provide better government for the people of this area.

Mrs McLeod: This is getting increasingly bizarre. This minister has made it very clear what it is he wants to do, whether he says a decision has technically been made or not. It's very clear what the Premier has decided he wants to do. We are being told this is a done deal, so let's talk about the done deal and why you're doing it.

The very municipalities, Minister, that your Premier, when he was campaigning, said were the most responsive, the most efficient, the most accountable are about to be demolished in favour of a giant new bureaucracy. Mr Speaker, I think you know the risks of this kind of scheme. I think you know that not only will this huge new bureaucracy be removed from the people, but this is

also a back door to market value and market value assessment. This isn't just about restructuring; it is also about taxes.

Minister, as you prepare to bulldoze your way through the very governments that your Premier once called the most responsive, the most efficient and the most accountable, can you tell me why you want to centralize power and take the voice away from local communities?

Hon Mr Leach: What this government wants to do and what I certainly want to do for my communities, the communities I live in, is to make sure that the delivery of services is done in the most cost-effective way possible and that government is provided as close to the people as possible, as long as it's effective, cost-effective and something that the individual communities want. But again, I stress, none of those decisions have been made as of yet. They will be in the not-too-distant future, I'm sure, but they haven't as of yet.

Mrs McLeod: We all have memories of previous Tory governments forcing regional governments across this province and saying they were going to be so much more efficient and we'd save so much money. In fact, that has not proven to be the case at all.

Yes, there have been studies, Minister. You've had a year and a half to study this. What have you done with the studies? It appears you're ready to throw them all into the trash can and now you're telling us that you want to ram the whole thing through by Christmas. You have studies of the issue. You want to impose an arbitrary direction and yet you're going to try to ram this through. This is Bill 26 before Christmas all over again, the Tory bulldozer on the move. It doesn't matter what people think; you're going to shut them right out of the decision.

In August, the Premier released a report that stated, and again I quote, "Ontarians must once again feel like citizens with a stake in the public life of their government rather than spectators who pay the bills but have little say in deciding what government does." Minister, as you prepare to radically change the government of the people of Metro Toronto, their taxes, their representation, will you allow the people of Metro to vote through referendum before you impose a huge new bureaucracy on them?

Hon Mr Leach: I think the people did have a referendum. It took place in June 1995.

I'd also like to state that when they're talking about ramming things through and doing things without consultation, there have been at least — at least — a dozen studies undertaken on governance in the GTA. All we're doing is taking all the information that has been developed to date, we're analysing it and we're getting advice from a number of different sources. When we have an opportunity to consolidate all that advice, we'll make a decision and we'll implement it, but until that decision is made, nothing's happening.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, if I may, just for the record, the quote that I read into the record was a quote from a report on the Premier calling for a referendum.

The Speaker: I appreciate that, but you've got to tell me who the question's to.

Mrs McLeod: I was just making a statement for the record, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: That's out of order.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I am placing my second question to the Minister of Correctional Services. Yesterday we heard some extremely shocking allegations about the conduct of ministry staff and officials at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre facilities last winter. We heard about youth being beaten, stripped, thrown naked into cells and denied medical attention, all of this in an adult detention facility. We all know about the tragic death of James Lonnee, also in an adult detention facility.

You said in relationship to the incidents that took place at the time that you were going to review it, that you were going to take the problems in hand, that we should be assured the problems would be dealt with. Yet today we see in the Hamilton Spectator that the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre has been called a powder keg, one that is ready to blow due to overcrowding. They're sleeping three to a cell there with dozens of people on the floor, and a lot of that is due to the fact that they have a surplus of young offenders, which is squeezing the adult inmates.

One teenager in your care has already died, Minister. We're worried about what's happening to these young people today. It is unbelievable that young people are being kept in another adult facility, one that has been called an overcrowded powder keg. Can you guarantee the safety of these young people?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): This is — I'm not sure how to term it — the big, misleading line from the opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Oakwood, come to order.

I appreciate the fact that you may not know how to term it, but that's definitely not one way to term it. Would you please withdraw.

Hon Mr Runciman: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The point I'm making is that overcrowding and the use of adult facilities with youth wings, if you will, is not something new. It has been in existence for some time. Certainly we've had problems with respect to the corrections facilities themselves in terms of aging, in terms of the whole nature of the system.

We are the first government that has committed to undertaking major structural change within the corrections system in terms of closing some of our facilities that are over 100 years of age, a whole range of initiatives, building brand-new facilities in Ontario. I think we have much to be proud of. With respect to young offenders, we are the first government that is moving in the direction of looking at a dedicated youth facility in the Metro area.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you are the first government in the history of Ontario to have a child die in an adult detention facility, and it happened on your watch. Surely

you don't think it is in some way misleading to want to raise the concern about other young people today in adult detention facilities and potentially at risk.

We've been advised that there are currently 53 young people in the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre. Many of these are overflowing from the Metro West Detention Centre in Toronto. The Hamilton centre is virtually at capacity. They can sleep maybe a few more kids in an overflow unit if they open that, and that is not the only potential danger spot. We have been advised that there are currently about 140 young people being kept at the Metro West Detention Centre, which is another adult facility. Their youth wing has capacity for only 125 kids, so they are already overcrowded at 140.

1410

You have admitted that young people should not be held in adult detention facilities. Why are there still so many young people in adult detention facilities when it is clearly inappropriate and clearly dangerous?

Hon Mr Runciman: This is an issue that has been raised on a number of occasions, even going back to 1987 when the member for Timiskaming was the Minister of Correctional Services, with respect to a crisis in terms of accommodation for young offenders aged 16 to 18, a real crisis, as it was described at that time.

We are indeed moving to address this situation in a much more effective and wide-ranging way than any government in recent memory. In fact the child advocate has been involved with this process every step of the way. We received a letter from Judy Finlay, the child advocate, with respect to our ministry's response to the report and recommendations on the management of youth. She indicated in her letter, dated September 13:

"I have reviewed the ministry response. I am pleased the response offers both immediate and long-term strategies to address recommendations outlined in the report of the office of child and family service advocacy."

The child advocate is very much involved, and we're very optimistic about the changes we are undertaking.

Mrs McLeod: A child has died on your watch. Young people in adult detention facilities have been mistreated on your watch. You have said it is not appropriate for young people to be housed in adult detention facilities. The question we're asking is, why is it continuing? Why is it still happening?

It isn't just Hamilton-Wentworth, it isn't just Metro West. There are currently 22 young people at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. There are 13 young people at the Windsor Detention Centre. In Kenora there are 22 kids in their unit. On the basis of just those institutions, there are at least 250 young people in Ontario today who are being housed in adult detention centres.

We know and you know, Minister, that the culture of these institutions is unsuitable for young offenders. You know that the staff isn't always trained to deal properly with youth. We know that the kids aren't being properly supervised. You have surely had enough evidence of how dangerous, how inappropriate this is. You've said that overcrowding itself is a recipe for violence.

I believe that the lives of these 250 children, and others that we don't know about and can't include in our count, are in your hands today and that you have a

responsibility to ensure that we do not face another tragedy like the death of James Lonnee. Will you undertake today to guarantee the safety of these young people by removing them from adult detention facilities?

Hon Mr Runciman: Overcrowding in Ontario's jails is not a new phenomenon. This is a legacy left to us by previous governments. We don't control the number of inmates sent to the system by the courts every day. We have wide-ranging fluctuations in population. We are addressing this in a very effective way, supported by the child advocate. We're making the tough decisions that were not made —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Runciman: I should point as well, during the time the Liberals were in power from 1985 to 1990, they almost doubled provincial spending in this province from \$26 billion to \$50 billion. What did they spend on the corrections system? In very difficult financial times, this government is moving to correct the situation left to us by them.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs McLeod: Give those kids a break.

Hon Mr Runciman: You don't have any credibility.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Patti Starr is in charge.

The Speaker: Order. Government members come to order, please. Minister of Agriculture, come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There's a level of debate that we get into, but some of the comments are completely sickening, and I would ask the member for Hamilton East to withdraw that one.

Mr Agostino: I withdraw that remark.

The Speaker: Thank you.

CHAIR OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF CABINET

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier and it concerns the conduct of the Chair of Management Board.

The Toronto Sun report that Dave Johnson "was disturbed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board's decision" on the TTC and said there will be a "reassessment" of the board. This is the same Dave Johnson, Chair of Management Board, who is actually before the labour relations board as a party. In fact, the Labour Relations Board ruled against Dave Johnson on October 22. Then, just three days later, the Chair of Management Board, Dave Johnson, threatens the independence of the labour relations board. He says they will be reassessed.

Premier, the labour relations board is just like a judge. It is supposed to be free from political interference. Recently, a federal minister, David Collenette, had to resign because he interfered with an independent board. Now the Chair of Management Board has committed a far more serious transgression. He has threatened retaliation against the labour relations board because he doesn't like its decision.

Premier, when are you going to ask for the resignation of the Chair of Management Board?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think it would be in order to hear from the Chair of Management Board himself.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): I would be happy to address this particular issue. I was approached by a member of the press with regard to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. I did indicate that my concern was for the riders of the Toronto Transit Commission. If you will note in the article, if you have a copy of the article, I expressed concern for the riders of the Toronto Transit Commission. Indeed, I would assume that's a sentiment shared —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): So you're going to fire the labour relations board.

Hon David Johnson: I made no reference to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The issue is that I expressed concern with regard to the riders of the Toronto Transit Commission; that the riders of the Toronto Transit Commission deserve to be able to use the system that they were paying for.

The Speaker (Mr Chris Stockwell): The answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: I also referred to a report that I indeed have received in a draft form from the Management Board with regard to the overall activities and as they relate to the strike. If you look at the quotes, I made no reference in terms of the Ontario —

The Speaker: The question has been answered. Thank you.

Mr Hampton: This was a question to the Premier and it was directed to the Premier for a specific reason. It concerns the Premier's standards for cabinet ministers.

Jean Charest — the Premier might know of Jean Charest, the leader of the federal Conservative Party — had to resign because he telephoned a judge on a particular case. This is far more serious. This is a case where the Chair of Management Board, in the context of what has happened, is threatening the members of the labour relations board because he doesn't like its decision. That's what's happening here. It's not a matter as to whether the Chair of Management Board meant well or didn't mean well. The fact of the matter is, he has made public comments that threaten the independence of the labour relations board.

Is the Premier saying that it would be all right for the Chair of Management Board to make threatening comments about a judge if a judge made a decision the Chair of Management Board didn't like? Is the Premier saying that's okay in his government?

Hon David Johnson: The only difficulty is that I did not make any comments with regard to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Indeed, I have the article before me. I indicated, "A number of people have suffered." This is with regard to the Toronto Transit Commission. "It is an extremely unfortunate and very bad precedent to have the TTC shutdown." I suspect we all agree with that. That says nothing about the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

I indicated, "I'm...terribly distressed that a...number of people have been greatly inconvenienced by the shutdown

of the TTC," simply. I indicated that I would be getting a report from Management Board with regard to the activities of Management Board.

1420

Interjection: Read the whole thing.

Hon David Johnson: Read the whole thing? I'm more than happy to read the whole thing. Nowhere in this article do I mention the labour relations board. Indeed, nowhere in the interview did I threaten or indicate anything to do with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Well, Speaker, I've got the article too, and what's important here is the context that members of the labour relations board would read this article in.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order. Government members, please come to order. I'd like to hear the leader of the third party. Go ahead.

Mr Hampton: What's important here is the context that members of the labour relations board would read this comment in. They have just made a decision against the Chair of Management Board. Three days later the Chair of Management Board is in the press. The Chair of Management Board may not like it, but he is responsible for the comments he makes. He is responsible for the stories that result, and this is the story:

"The Ontario Labour Relations Board will undergo a reassessment after allowing a shutdown of the TTC, Management Board Chairman Dave Johnson says.

"Johnson was disturbed by the labour relations board's decision that saw the Toronto Transit Commission, which services one million" people, shut down. And then — this is not just in the Toronto Sun, it's also in the Toronto Star, and it says:

"Management Board Chair David Johnson, too, referred to the TTC shutdown....

"And he promised a review of the labour board."

My question, Speaker —

The Speaker: No, it's been put, thank you. The leader of the third party, come to order, please. Management Board Chair.

Hon David Johnson: Well, Mr Speaker, I guess the question is, is it okay for the leader of the third party to stand up and read what is obviously not my quote in the paper, which has no quotation marks —

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): It's in quotation marks.

Hon David Johnson: It does not have quotation marks around it. Show the article to the member behind. My quotes in this article are clear. My quotes deal with concern with the riders of the transit commission and my quotes indicate the fact that I will be receiving reports and those reports are from Management Board with regard to the overall context of the strike. Not anywhere am I attributed a quote with regard to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and surely that should be evident even to the leader of the third party.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Mr Speaker, a question to the Premier again because this concerns his standards for his government. I've already cited where the federal Minister of National Defence, David Collenette, had to step down because he wrote a letter to an independent board about

a particular case, and I have already cited where the now leader of the federal Conservative Party had to step down because he contacted a judge about a particular case. Here we have the Chair of Management Board, who is currently a party before the labour relations board in an unfair labour practice charge, and he has a decision made against him by the board and three days later he is in the press, and it's true, you said a number of people suffered as a result of the TTC shutdown. And then — and it's very clear who the attribution is to: "Johnson said, noting the actions of the board will be reviewed."

So I say to the Premier, it's very clear that even in Brian Mulroney's government, someone who merely contacts a judge or an independent board has to step down. Here we have a member of your cabinet threatening a board. When are you going to call for the Chair of Management Board's resignation? He has interfered with an independent tribunal.

Hon Mr Harris: No, he hasn't. The allegations are false and that's been clarified to you.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Is that what he says? There's not going to be any review?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Unbelievable. You're in denial, a total state of denial.

Mr Hampton: I go back to the context in which this is made. The government has already fired four chairs of the labour relations board. Just in the past month, this government has fired four of the co-chairs of the labour relations board. The labour relations board reaches a decision which the Chair of Management Board disagrees with, so three days later we see in the press, and it's a very clear attribution, it's very clear what the Chair of Management Board is referring to, "A number of people suffered as a result of the TTC shutdown," Johnson said, noting the board's actions will be reviewed." Not Management Board's actions; the labour relations board's actions will be reviewed.

I say to the Premier and ask the question again: It's very clear what is being attributed and it's very clear what the comments are. Is it okay in your government for a cabinet minister to threaten an independent tribunal? Is it okay in your government for a cabinet minister to threaten a judge?

Hon Mr Harris: Other than some silly allegations, completely erroneous, completely false, denied by the minister, which I have asked him about, you've not brought me any little piece of evidence that indicates any impropriety has been done. Perhaps you have problems in your own mind understanding that, but I do not.

Mr Hampton: The Premier usually agrees with the Toronto Sun. It would seem that today he disagrees with the Toronto Sun. But the Toronto Sun wasn't the only newspaper to hear the comments of the Chair of Management Board. The Toronto Sun was joined by the Toronto Star. This is what the Toronto Star says, "Management Board Chair Dave Johnson, too, referred to the TTC shutdown as an 'unfortunate aspect.'" Then it says that "he promised a review of the labour board." You have two reputable newspapers in Toronto that heard it very clearly, so Premier —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I'll try again, as I was rudely interrupted by the Conservative side. It's very clear that the Toronto Sun and the Toronto Star heard the same thing. They heard the Chair of Management Board say in the context of the TTC decision that he was going to order a review of the labour relations board.

I put it to the Premier again. I'm not confused. The Toronto Sun isn't confused. The Toronto Star isn't confused. When are you going to ask for the resignation of the Chair of Management Board, who has clearly threatened the independence of the labour relations board? When are you going to ask for his resignation?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the answer to the direct question is very obvious. I might indicate, you know, that I have asked about this and to the best of my knowledge, other than reading the Toronto Sun, the Toronto Star has not talked to anybody or heard anything else.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and it has to do with actions of government members as well. It has to do with the incident at Ipperwash on September 6, where for the first time ever one of our native people was killed during a dispute about land.

We have been told that on three separate occasions the Conservative member for Lambton, Mr Beaubien, was at the command post of the OPP. We've also been informed that on three separate occasions apparently he was in touch with your office, either yourself or your staff, including on one occasion written communication. That is right up until the shooting took place on September 6, 1990.

Premier, can you confirm that Mr Beaubien talked to either yourself or a member of your staff during those three days leading up to the shooting of the native at Ipperwash?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Not to the best of my knowledge. If the Attorney General knows more, I'm happy to refer it to him.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As everyone knows, there are currently criminal charges pending in connection with the events surrounding the occupation of Ipperwash Provincial Park, and in the circumstances it would not be appropriate to comment on these issues.

Mr Phillips: Last week the crown decided not to proceed with charges. We have at Ipperwash an extremely serious matter. I return to my question to you, Premier, because it was to your office — in fact, our information, it was to you, Premier — that the call was placed by the member for Lambton on three separate occasions including four hours before the shooting took place, to you, Premier, including written communications.

The question to you, Premier, is this: Did Mr Beaubien speak to you or anyone on your staff in those hours leading up to that shooting?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Premier? Oh, I'm sorry. Attorney General.

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, this is the subject of a very serious criminal —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. That was my fault. I said “Premier” when the question had been passed the previous time to the Attorney General. It is appropriate now that the Attorney General’s on the floor. Attorney General?

Hon Mr Harnick: As you’re aware, there are very serious criminal charges pending, and anything that could be the subject of evidence at those criminal charges, it would be most appropriate not to discuss. In addition, there are civil suits pending against the crown arising out of these matters and we have to be very careful not to interfere with the rights of private litigants. So it would not be appropriate to discuss this.

PREMIER’S COMMENTS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Premier. On the anniversary of the referendum in Quebec and the most unfortunate comments made by the then Premier of that province, subsequent to the outcome of the vote being made public, with regard to various groups within that province, would the Premier of Ontario clarify for this House the meaning of the remarks attributed to him regarding participants in the major demonstration in this city over the weekend and in relation particularly to the expressed concern by the Arab community and the Iranian community about the impact and import of comments attributed to the Premier of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I’m happy to respond. I can’t imagine what it possibly has to do with statements that were made by the former Premier of Quebec. But, quite frankly, there was a letter written to me by the Canadian Arab Federation, who seemed to imply, because I acknowledged they were in a parade which I said was very successful — I congratulated the organizers of the parade, I congratulated the parade, I congratulated all those who participated — that somehow or other they read into that some denigration of Arabs or Iranians and Iraqis. I have written back and assured them that is not the case; that I complimented those involved in Saturday’s protest parade and I further indicated — and I thank the member for the question, to clarify any misrepresentations — that if my remarks or indeed the interpretation of my remarks caused offence, I’ve asked them to please accept my apologies.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate that final remark by the Premier, but could the Premier indicate to the members of the assembly whether he believes it contributes to social harmony and to the respect in which all members of various ethnic groups must be held within this province for the head of the government to single out particular groups for mention in this way?

I do believe that there is an analogy, unfortunately, between the impact of these statements and the unfortunate impact of the statements of M. Parizeau on referendum night in Montreal.

Hon Mr Harris: Mr Speaker, let me assure you and members of the House, and indeed the Arab federation. If they’ve taken offence I apologize. Let me assure they were not singled out. I had acknowledged a very large

presence in the parade; a lot of teachers — I am a former teacher — they were parading with. I mentioned a number of union members. I mentioned a number of associations. If some chose out of that to mention one or two or three or four or five as opposed to all who were there, I think that is regrettable and indeed I have apologized. If there is any offence that has been taken, I assure people that was not my intention.

Furthermore, I want it clear that I’ve been very complimentary on all those who took part in Saturday’s parade and the cause and the concerns that they expressed.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Whisper in his ear.

Mr Clement: I wanted to put it for the public record, actually.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Government members are allowed to ask questions. I ask that you maintain order.

Mr Clement: Minister, there was an interesting article in the Toronto Star today entitled “Ontario’s Untutored Minds,” in which 22 professors offered what they called a “bleak report card” on today’s first-year university students. One of those professors in fact taught me a course called Politics and Morality, but we won’t hold that against him. I did want to put on the record that this is a stunning indictment on the quality of some of the students who have been educated and tutored by our educational system. I wanted to know from the Minister of Education, for the record, on behalf of my constituents, what his views are on the quality of education in our system and some of the criticisms that have been offered by these 22 professors of educational institutions in the province of Ontario.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for the excellent question. I share his concern and the concern that was expressed in the article for the quality of the education that graduates of our secondary school programs are receiving. I note, and I’ve noted over the course of the last year, that there are a variety of remedial programs available in colleges and universities to first-year students to bring them up to an acceptable entrance level, and of course that’s not acceptable to anyone, as was indicated in that article.

This government is committed, and we have been committed from the time we formed the government, to examine the curriculum in our secondary school program to make sure it’s up to the demanding standards of our colleges and our universities. We’re going to ensure that our curriculum in fact meets the highest standards in the world. We’re reviewing math, reading, writing, science, history, geography and technology, among other areas, to make sure that we have those high graduation standards.

In addition to that, we have initiated the Education Quality and Accountability Office, which will be in charge of testing students across the province, therefore ensuring that colleges and universities can take the level

of accreditation that a high school diploma should represent.

Mr Clement: Minister, one of the penultimate paragraphs of this particular article says, and I quote, "Get the bureaucrats, whether union or government, off the backs of principals and teachers." It seems to me to be a very fair point. I'd like to know what our government's position is. How are we going to address this situation?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I candidly agree with the professors, although apparently —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Although obviously some of the members opposite don't agree that we need to take some of the bureaucrats off the shoulders of teachers and principals across the province, I quite candidly agree with that observation and with the one made by my counterpart in New Brunswick when they said the current layers of administration and decision-making, together with the competing forces of many interest groups, are formidable barriers to improving the system. I think that reifies that observation.

1440

I don't believe it's the fault of the teachers, the students or the parents in Ontario that some graduation standards aren't up to par. I believe we need to examine, as we are, our system of funding and our system of governance to make sure our teachers and students have the opportunity to perform with excellence, and that's what we intend to do.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING (KINGSTON)

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You were asked a question regarding municipal restructuring that involved the city of Kingston and the counties of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington yesterday.

From the self-congratulatory tone of the question and response one would gather that the restructuring has gone on without a hitch and that everyone is quite happy. You know that's not the case, Mr Minister. Local politicians are feeling betrayed by you because of your failure to live up to a commitment you made to over 200 politicians and individuals at the county courthouse in Napanee on May 9. At that time you stated that unless there was one restructuring deal brought forward by the two counties and the city, you would appoint a commission.

Minister, you know that hasn't happened. You were questioned about this at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in August by politicians of the city of Kingston and Frontenac county. You reiterated your comment that you would appoint a restructuring commission to look at the western urban boundary sooner rather than later. Now you've backed away from this commitment. Minister, won't you verify today that you made this commitment not once but twice at two different meetings?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I repeat that the Lennox and Addington county restructuring was extremely successful and that every community in Lennox and Addington is extremely happy

with the way things are going. Frontenac and Kingston townships are very happy with the way they've restructured their county. There's no doubt that another issue may have to be addressed, and I've reserved judgement to appoint a commission at some time in the future. Both counties have to do a tremendous amount of work to implement the decisions they've made to date. My recommendation to them was to get on with that restructuring.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me just show you, Mr Minister, the lead editorial in the Kingston Whig-Standard today which reads, "Minister Leach Betrays Kingston."

The very last paragraph reads: "For a government that has pledged to make decisions based on common sense, Minister Leach's abdication of responsibility over the Ernestown boundary issue represents a breakdown in both philosophy and action. He has betrayed this community."

How can you expect other municipalities to restructure when they can't trust you to live up to the commitments you've made to them?

Hon Mr Leach: If we're going to be quoting newspaper articles, let's finish the quote: "The minister says that he may consider the issue again further down the road, but in the meantime Ernestown township will proceed to amalgamate with Lennox and Addington," which was the choice of the local community to do. All townships and communities within Lennox and Addington and the upper tier supported having that type of restructuring. We support that restructuring. However, we will revisit the issue in the future if there's a need to do so.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING (TORONTO)

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is also to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You continue to pretend in this Legislature that you have not yet made a decision on the question of amalgamating the six area municipalities in Metropolitan Toronto, yet you have no problem and no hesitation, in talking to the media, to state that clearly is your preferred option. When you say, for example, "If you can run a city with one police department...why do you need six economic development departments...six fire departments," you're clearly stating your preferred position.

I ask you: Will you have the decency to show some respect for the Parliament of this province and state here in this House that while you may not have passed the final cabinet minute, for all intents and purposes you've really made up your mind and that the recommendation you have taken or are taking to cabinet is to amalgamate the six area municipalities into one upper-tier municipality in Metropolitan Toronto? Will you at least have the decency to confirm that today, Minister?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I think anyone with a little common sense could understand that that's the type of question that must be asked, and we're looking for answers to that question. Does it make any sense to have that duplication? Does it make any sense to have seven garbage collection agencies? Does it make any sense to have six planning —

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Bring Crombie to the Legislature, for God's sake.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I hear Mel Lastman is coming to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Cochrane South, could you take your own seat. Heckling is difficult.

Hon Mr Leach: There are a number of options that are still on the table. If somebody asked what's my preferred option, yes, I have a preferred option, but that doesn't make it a decision of the government. When the government has an opportunity to review all of the options and all of the input that goes into that, this government will make the decision.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On this question, Minister, I want to tell you this. The people of Ontario can feel you slithering hither and thither on this question, as I feel it every day. The people across Ontario may think they're safe because we're only talking about Metro restructuring, but how are the people going to know about whether or not some people in Hamilton are likely to be joined to Brantford or Guelph, or Halton, for that matter? People are very concerned.

Can you give the people of Ontario any assurances that you're not going to determine their unique future without any consultation whatsoever and that you will not decide by fiat or simply the iron fist of Mike Harris on these very questions?

Hon Mr Leach: I'll refer back to the previous question on Kingston and Lennox and Addington, where we said repeatedly that we wanted local decisions on local issues and they made those local decisions on local issues.

Every region within Ontario is not the same, and we'll deal with each individual region on its own merits and make decisions that we feel are appropriate for those regions.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): You are being an idiot, Mike.

The Speaker: The member for Brampton North, I would ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Spina: I withdraw, sir.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Last week I had the opportunity to proclaim the opening of Ontario Library Week at the Fort Erie Public Library, and a couple of days later I had the pleasure of attending a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Wainfleet Township Public Library. Also, the Port Colborne Public Library has recently undergone extensive renovations to improve the high-quality services it offers to the good people of Port Colborne.

I believe these libraries play an essential intellectual, cultural and social role in these small communities in my riding. I would ask the Minister if her ministry will continue to support libraries in small communities like those in Niagara South.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): As the honourable member knows, we are currently examining what the provincial interest should be in a province-wide library system. I

want to assure the honourable member that we remain committed to a very strong province-wide library network.

As the member is aware, libraries are a part of the Who Does What initiative and I have spent the last nine months in consultation with the library community — that's municipalities, library workers and users and the private sector — to discuss what we should be doing with respect to the whole issue of user fees and board governance and the role of government. I hope to be sharing my findings with the Who Does What committee in the next few weeks.

Mr Hudak: As you will recall, my office surveyed library patrons in Niagara South on library services reform, and I thank you for taking the time to read my survey as part of your extensive consultations. I understand that as part of your consultations you have met with many members of the library community, including Mary Padolyak, the CEO of the Wainfleet Township Public Library.

1450

Madam Minister, from your extensive consultations and deliberations on library issues, what conclusions can you draw and share with the House about user fees as a potential source of revenue?

Hon Ms Mushinski: Thank you again for the question. I believe it's a well-known fact that most municipalities pay 85%, sometimes as much as 90%, of the costs to operate their local libraries. Given this fact, I think we have to ask ourselves how we as a province can then argue against giving them the tools by which to help themselves. When we provide an average of only 10% of the funding, I don't believe we should then be in a position of dictating to municipalities how they should be raising the additional revenues.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Premier. Premier, this relates to an issue in your own riding so I hope you will answer me directly. As the Premier will know, hospitals in northern Ontario are hurting because of the government's cuts to the health budget. Again, I go back to your own riding, Mr Premier, where the Civic Hospital which, through no fault of its own, had to close down the operating room on various occasions because of your cuts to health care.

Premier, let's go back to your commitment in a document that you sold to the people in northern Ontario, called A Voice for the North. You indicated that if elected you would recognize the special needs of people in the north, you would give northerners a direct say in change in the Ministry of Health's planning and resource allocations so that it includes more consideration for northern priorities and conditions. Again, Mr Premier, this was from your document, A Voice for the North.

Premier, why haven't you kept your commitment to provide northern hospitals with a say in changing the Ministry of Health planning and resource allocation? Again, Mr Premier, this was your commitment. This is your hospital.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister met with him two weeks ago and I think he could —

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The Premier is quite correct. I met with the leaders of the hospitals in North Bay and frankly, they told me a couple of things that I thought were quite innovative and quite exciting and were signs of very good planning that's going on.

As you know, North Bay and the hospitals around North Bay have been very much leaders over the past few years in terms of restructuring the system. Most recently, they've gotten together to ensure that they are working together to get rid of the waste and duplication and overlap in services there. They are in the process of going back to the district health council and presenting us with a specific plan to restructure the system. Do you know what they said, ladies and gentlemen? They want to do it without the commission having to go into that area because they think the commission will take too long and restructuring's long overdue. That attitude should be applauded and not discouraged, as in your question.

Mr Miclash: I go back to the Premier because, Premier, this was your commitment to the people of northern Ontario. As I indicated, this is a hospital in your riding, the North Bay Civic Hospital. They've had to close down their operating room on a number of occasions this year because of your cuts. No operations were performed at the Civic for three weeks this past summer and one week in October.

I am also told the OR will be closed one week in November, two weeks in December and possibly three to four weeks next March. Again, Mr Premier, this is a hospital in your riding. You continue to state that your cuts are not having an effect on patient care. I want to know what you have to say to the patients of North Bay, who are concerned about their health care and about the deterioration of that health care when their operating room is going to be closed for a total of 10 weeks come this year.

Hon Mr Wilson: First of all, the honourable member is fearmongering. There's no evidence that there's anything wrong with access to the General Hospital or St Joe's. There aren't the waiting lists that the honourable member is implying in his question, and the reason the question's brought up is that there is a —

Interjections.

Mr Miclash: Why can't the Premier answer for his own riding?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Interjections.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Under standing order 23(i) it says, "Imputes faults or unavowed motives to another member." Yesterday "wimp" was not acceptable. How is what he said acceptable today if "wimp" was unacceptable yesterday?

The Speaker: I understand what the member for St Catharines is suggesting. In fact, in previous days in this House when I was Speaker, "fearmongering" has been used by both sides and I've allowed —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The clock's running. I think it's important I address the point of order brought forward by the member for St Catharines. I will say to the member for St Catharines that it's difficult to understand because the Speaker has to make rulings every day on different words that fly around this place. "Fearmongering" in fact was used by the opposition in the first instance. I allowed it. As far as "wimp" is concerned, I didn't allow it. I think they are two different words with two different, clear connotations.

I now would ask the Minister of Health to summarize his answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: The basis of the honourable member's question I think is a media report out of North Bay very recently. It doesn't talk about there's a problem in terms of access to care or quality care. The people of North Bay and Nipissing and the health professionals there are providing top-quality care. This government has invested tremendously in northern Ontario. The first MRI announcements were in northern Ontario. The first reinvestment announcements for this government in terms of health care, some 16 months ago, were all for northern Ontario, most of them in your ridings, ridings of the opposition, because we're doing what's right for health care.

The article the member refers to talks about operating rooms being closed at 3 o'clock because nurses have to be paid overtime, according to the collective agreement, after 3 o'clock. It implies that people aren't getting access. In no way does it provide evidence that people aren't getting access. Indeed, in the meeting I had two weeks ago with hospital officials, they're doing an excellent job of providing top-quality service to the people of the north and the people of Nipissing and North Bay.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General and it concerns the family support plan. My constituent's name is Rose Landry. She has a seven-year-old daughter. Before you closed the regional family support plan offices and laid off 290 staff, she used to receive her family support payments five days after the payor's payroll deduction happened.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Regularly.

Mr Hampton: Regularly she received her payments. But since August, that's changed. Since you closed the family support plan office in Thunder Bay and laid off the staff, that has changed. She has received no payment for October despite the fact that the support payor's cheque was garnished on October 11 for \$215, and on October 25. She has received no money despite the fact these garnishments have happened. She's going to lose her hydro tomorrow and her gas service after that. I want to ask you, how much longer do women and children in this province have to pay for your destruction of the family support plan? How much longer does she have to pay?

1500

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Bill 82 has received first reading in this Legislature. It does two things: It cracks

down on parents who don't pay their support and it allows payors who meet their obligations to opt out of the system, which in turn allows the government to put all our resources into the problem cases. These problems, and problems with the family support plan, have existed interminably, and what I say to the member opposite is that the faster this piece of legislation comes before this House for second and third readings, the faster we can begin the real repair to the family support plan —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

REFERRAL OF QUESTION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Section 33(f) of the standing orders indicates that a minister may choose to refer a question directed towards the minister to a minister who is responsible for the subject matter to which the question relates. I take you back to the question that was raised by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. It was a question to the Premier and it related specifically to whether the member for Lambton had been in direct communication with the Premier immediately prior to the events at Ipperwash.

Although the Premier referred the question to the Attorney General, there's clearly no way the Attorney General could know whether the member for Lambton had been in direct communication with the Premier. It's an important piece of information. For the public understanding, I believe the Premier has an obligation to respond. I understand he can decline, but I don't believe a referral is appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): To the leader of the official opposition, the difficulty you're faced with as Speaker is, I do not know the conversations and discussions that take place between ministers and premiers and members. In the Premier's opinion, it may well be appropriate for the Attorney General to respond to that for any number of reasons.

You can't ask me to get inside the heads of all the members of this place and have conversations and so on. I can't ask government members to start referring or not referring and start measuring whether they can or cannot be referred, because there are far too many meetings that take place that too many people are involved in. When an honourable member refers a question, you have to understand, and I believe, that that is properly what is before this House and they have made a proper and honourable decision.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I have a concern about what information is properly given to the public in answer to a direct question. I understand there were three very legitimate options for the Premier. One was to say yes, there was a direct communication, one was to say no, there wasn't, the third was to decline to answer the question. But only he is able to answer the question directed to him by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. It doesn't matter what conversations —

The Speaker: Order. In your opinion: only the Premier is capable of responding, in your opinion. The fact of the matter is, there's the Premier's opinion and the minister's

opinion and the caucus's opinion. We all hold opinions on how best we may answer or ask questions. It's not up to the Speaker to determine.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Speaker, you're skating here.

The Speaker: The member for Essex South, I'm not skating one bit. If you want to look at precedents on this issue, you can check the precedents all you want. I suggest to the member for Essex South that he take his time and look into it. The fact is that there's no Speaker who's going to start determining when and who a minister can start referring their ministerial questions to, and I can't get involved in that discussion. I would be here endlessly determining whether or not a question can be passed. Thank you for your point of order.

PETITIONS

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"To Premier Michael Harris, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Al Leach and members of the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"We, the undersigned, protest this government's actions against tenants described below.

"The Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants. Rent control allows for security and stability in their homes and communities. Uncontrolled rent increases leave tenants, their families and other communities open to eviction, personal distress, and contribute directly" —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order. There's too much noise. Order.

Mr Curling: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. As I said, this petition is to the Ontario Legislature and also to the Premier Mike Harris, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Al Leach, and also members of the Ontario provincial Legislature, and it states:

"We, the undersigned, protest this government's actions against tenants described below.

"The Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants. Rent control allows for security and stability in their homes and communities. Uncontrolled rent increases leave tenants, their families and other communities open to eviction, personal distress, and contribute directly to social instability. We want this government to stop any actions that would allow uncontrolled rents.

"Further, this government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favourable to landlords for easier and faster evictions. This is unacceptable to Ontario's tenants and damaging to Ontario communities.

"This government also plans to get rid of public housing and has halted the creation of basement apartments and a new supply of affordable non-profit housing. These types of housing are necessary for low- and moderate-income tenants —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There's way too much noise. There's too much noise in the House. The members for Cochrane South and Dovercourt.

Mr Curling: Thank you, Mr Speaker. This is extremely important to 3.3 million tenants in this province and I would like the government to listen. They are the ones who are going to change this. I will not start all over, but again in the middle, just for time's sake. I hope they're listening this time.

"This government also plans to get rid of public housing and has halted the creation of basement apartments and a new supply of affordable non-profit housing. These types of housing are necessary for low- and moderate-income tenants to obtain accommodation they can afford. The government must cease all actions that reduce the affordability and availability of these kinds of housing."

"This government has eliminated funding for United Tenants of Ontario, five municipal tenant federations and other important tenant services at a time when they're attacking all tenants' rights. Funding for those groups must be reinstated so that Ontario's tenants and not just their landlords are able to bring their views to bear in government deliberations on tenants' rights and protections. A consultation process with tenants' organizations should be initiated immediately to develop a plan for suitable funding for services to tenants."

I will affix my signature to the thousands who are concerned.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Yesterday afternoon I had the pleasure of meeting with seniors in the Lions centre in Fort Erie, Ontario. They are concerned about the senior driver exam, and I'm proud to present a petition on their behalf. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the town of Fort Erie has been closed as of September 24 and the centre in Niagara Falls will close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Fort Erie senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences to seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Fort Erie and that recognizes that when tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest place to assess driver ability."

I affix my signature to this petition.

APPAREILS DE LOTERIE VIDÉO

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Monsieur le Président, aujourd'hui je vous présente quatre des 32 pétitions provenant de différentes paroisses de ma circonscription s'opposant au projet de loi 75. Ces pétitions proviennent de l'abbé Côme Chenier de la paroisse Sainte-Trinité de Rockland, de la paroisse de

Lefebvre, de la paroisse d'Alfred et de l'abbé André Bouchard de la paroisse de Plantagenet.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le projet de loi 75 aura un effet négatif sur les organismes de charité ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 75 provoquera une augmentation des cas de dépendance au jeu et causera des dommages irréparables à des familles de toutes les régions de la province ;

«Attendu que le gouvernement n'a pas spécifié quelles organisations de charité bénéficieront des revenus des loteries vidéo,

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons à tous les partis représentés à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de s'opposer au projet de loi 75.»

J'ajoute ma signature à cette pétition qui contient plus de 500 noms.

1510

RENT REGULATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition from about 100 residents of St Andrew-St Patrick in buildings at 7, 10 and 35 Walmer Road who are very concerned about this government's intention to destroy the current Rent Control Act. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act; and

"Whereas the government is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing; and

"Whereas the government is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws which provide true protection for tenants in place."

I support this petition wholeheartedly.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative government has passed a resolution urging the government of Canada to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada to ensure that convicted murderers serve their entire sentences; and

"Whereas convicted first-degree murderers are allowed to apply to the court for a reduction of the parole eligibility period; and

"Whereas victims' families must relive the horrors of the original crime through a jury hearing for this early parole and relive this every time the killer is given rehearings for early parole; and

"Whereas the provincial government must bear a large degree of the costs involved with a jury hearing;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Attorney General of Ontario to request the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to reconsider his decision under Bill C-45 and to repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada."

I agree with this petition and have so signed it.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has started to charge senior citizens and social assistance recipients a \$2 user fee for each prescription filled since July 15; and

"Whereas seniors on a fixed income do not significantly benefit from the income tax savings created by this user fee copayment or from other non-health user fees; and

"Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 user fee will not compensate for the suffering and misery caused by this user fee or the painstaking task involved to fill out the application forms; and

"Whereas the current Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, promised as an opposition MPP in a July letter to Ontario pharmacists that his party would not endorse legislation that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents, strongly urge the government of Ontario to repeal this user fee because the tax-saving user fee concept is not fair, it is not sensitive, it is not accessible to low-income or fixed-income seniors, and lest we forget, our province's seniors have paid their dues by collectively contributing to the social, economic, moral and political fabric of Canada."

I've affixed my signature to this document because I agree with it.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): It's a pleasure to present yet another petition on behalf of seniors at Port Colborne and Wainfleet about drivers' exams for senior citizens. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas the driver examination centre in the city of Welland is slated to close later in October; and

"Whereas these changes represent an undue hardship in that they will require Port Colborne and Wainfleet senior citizens to drive up to an hour away to take their annual road test on the unfamiliar roads of St Catharines; and

"Whereas the fact that a very high proportion of seniors eventually pass their road test has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements for issuing drivers' licences to seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Port Colborne and Wainfleet and that recognizes that when road tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest places to assess driver ability."

Beneath the signatures of Edna Hannigan and Betty Hardman I affix my signature.

PRINCE EDWARD HEIGHTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition signed here by 3,968 residents of Ontario, in two binders, addressed to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced the closure of Prince Edward Heights, a first-rate community-based facility for developmentally disabled adults; and

"Whereas Prince Edward Heights is not an institution in the traditional sense and is a community in and of itself for those who reside there; and

"Whereas the care provided at Prince Edward Heights is of a specialized nature requiring highly trained, skilled and dedicated staff; and

"Whereas alternate services and supports that would meet the needs of the clients of Prince Edward Heights are not in place in the community; and

"Whereas these clients have lived at Prince Edward Heights for up to 25 years and have developed many important friendships and relationships; and

"Whereas the clients of Prince Edward Heights have no desire to leave their home community to be repatriated to a community that they have no relationship with; and

"Whereas the economy of Prince Edward county will be devastated by the planned closure of Prince Edward Heights;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, demand that the decision to close Prince Edward Heights be revoked and that the clients of Prince Edward Heights be allowed to continue living with dignity, stability and without threat in the community that they call their home."

I have affixed my signature to it.

ALLEGED ABUSE OF PATIENTS

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I have a petition here signed by over 300 people, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request a public inquiry into all aspects of the alleged physical and mental excesses and abuses which reportedly took place in the Centre for Behavioural Rehabilitation under the direction of a physical education teacher educator named Ahmos Rolider, PhD, teacher ed phys ed, during the years 1989 to 1993;

"We, the undersigned, wish there to be a public inquiry into the role of the administration of the brain injury program at Chedoke during those years with regard to the aforementioned abuses, as well as the administrator's subsequent action/inaction with regard to the victims of such abuse."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have approximately another 1,000 names with regard to the restructuring

commission's report in Sudbury. That puts it at approximately 11,000, and it reads:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury hospitals."

I sign my name, as I agree with the petition.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking and the ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I endorse this petition and have so signed it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I beg leave to present the 23rd report of the standing committee on government agencies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Do you wish to make a brief statement, Mr Crozier? No.

Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEWER POLITICIANS ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996

RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE DÉPUTÉS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 81, An Act to reduce the number of members of the Legislative Assembly by making the number and boundaries of provincial electoral districts identical to those of their federal counterparts and to make consequential amendments to statutes concerning electoral representation / *Projet de loi 81, Loi visant à réduire le nombre des députés à l'Assemblée législative en rendant identiques le nombre et les limites des circonscriptions électorales provinciales et fédérales et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à des lois concernant la représentation électorale.*

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I had begun my intervention in this debate by quoting a resolution passed by the members of the Algoma District Municipal Association in opposition to changing the boundaries that would produce a situation in the constituency of Algoma where the distance from one end to the other of the proposed new constituency, if it were superimposed on southern Ontario, would run from Windsor to Quebec City.

They pointed out in the resolution that they felt this would make it very difficult for constituents to be able to have proper input to their representative, would be difficult for the area to be properly represented at Queen's Park, and they also raised the concern of the loss of five ridings out of the total of 15 from northern Ontario and the problem that would mean for northern Ontario having a voice in the assembly at Queen's Park.

Since that time I've received a number of resolutions passed by municipalities within the constituency such as the township of Johnson, the township of Dubreuilville, the township of Prince and the township of Michipicoten, all in support of the position taken by the Algoma District Municipal Association.

I just wonder whether members in southern Ontario constituencies really have any concept of what it would be like to represent a riding that would run from Windsor to Quebec City. The constituency I represent now already, if superimposed on southern Ontario, would go from about Windsor to Kingston. It's true that there is not a large population in the constituency and, as I said the last time, I am certainly not opposed to redistribution. I've represented the people of Algoma, and I'm proud to have represented the people of Algoma, for over 21 years in this assembly and I've seen redistributions.

There's no question that certain areas of the province are growing in population and need to have additional representation for it to be fair. But in the past there has been an agreement, because of a geographic situation, the

factor of just the very size of northern Ontario, that there would be a minimum of 15 seats in northern Ontario. In this proposed redistribution that commitment has been broken and we are losing five seats in northern Ontario, and as a result the new constituencies are going to be enormous in most cases — not in all, but in most.

It's been suggested by the government that they made a commitment in the election campaign, that people voted for them, and therefore they should proceed. Their commitment was that they would mirror the federal boundaries. I remind you that the federal redistribution is increasing the number of seats in Ontario in the House of Commons from 99 to 103, recognizing that certain areas of Ontario are growing and need representation.

They are also breaking their commitment to northern Ontario where there used to be a minimum of 11 federal constituencies in the north and they are dropping it by one. But there are factors involved in the federal redistribution that do not have any relevance to Ontario, and that is the fallacy of the government's arguments in this regard.

Before I get to that, I want to respond to one comment that was made by the Chair of Management Board, the government House leader. In introducing this legislation in the House, he pointed out that Saskatchewan has just recently gone through a redistribution and that there they significantly changed the boundaries based on one person, one vote, and increased the number of urban ridings and decreased the number of rural ridings. What he did not mention was that in that particular redistribution, the government of Saskatchewan and the other parties in Saskatchewan agreed that the two northern ridings in Saskatchewan, which are enormous, would be maintained and would not be subject to the one person, one vote regulation or aim or goal that all the other constituencies were.

I wonder why the Chair of Management Board didn't mention that when he made reference to Saskatchewan. I suspect it's because this government isn't prepared to make a similar commitment to northern Ontario. I wonder why.

As I said in my opening remarks, the member for Mississauga South indicated in a debate in 1985 that the question is not just equal representation but effective representation. I made reference to the Camp commission, which reported the month I arrived in this place in 1975, in which a non-partisan or tripartisan, I suppose, commission recommended a redistribution and recognized the need to look at not only population and rep by pop, but also other factors in determining boundaries, one of those factors being geography. Those recommendations of the Camp commission have stood in good stead over the years.

I make clear once again that we in this political party do not oppose redistribution, but we are opposed to a redistribution which would produce a situation where rural and northern Ontario are not adequately represented effectively in this House. When I say "effectively," I mean that if you have a constituency or a number of constituencies which are so large as to cover from Windsor to Quebec City, I don't believe very many people in this place, including myself, can effectively

represent those people in that kind of constituency in this House, and I call on the government to take that into consideration.

It's been suggested, "Well, the federal MPs are going to represent these kinds of riding, so if they can do it, surely the provincial members can do it." I suggest that the federal MPs have certain concerns that they expressed in the debates around their redistribution that relate exactly to that matter.

As I said, Camp said: "There should be some elasticity for regions where wide populations are scattered. Rep by pop should be tempered by broad determinations. We should retain representation from those areas without application of strict mathematics, because with the application of strict mathematics those areas would be deprived."

In the federal redistribution some of the factors that came into effect that affected that redistribution don't have any relevance to Ontario. For one thing, at one end of the spectrum, Prince Edward Island is supposed to have four members constitutionally, and there are also provisions for New Brunswick and Newfoundland to have certain numbers of MPs in the House of Commons. At the other end of the spectrum, the government, I think quite wisely, said, "There has got to be a minimum number of representatives for the 90,000 people in Yukon and the Northwest Territories," so they said, "There will be three members: one in Yukon and two in the Northwest Territories." So when you look at the overall total allowed for in their redistribution, that affected the number of constituencies that could then be drawn in the more populous areas of the country, particularly Ontario. 1530

Why is it that as a provincial Legislature we should be taking into account provisions made for Prince Edward Island, the Yukon and Northwest Territories in determining the number of seats we believe should be established to represent the people in this their provincial assembly? It doesn't make sense. Would anyone suggest that because the Yukon is entitled to only one MP in the House of Commons as a result of the provisions of the redistribution at the federal level, it should only have one member in its Legislative Assembly? Of course not. That's what is being done, though, in Ontario. Because 103 ridings will be established federally in Ontario, therefore we should have 103 ridings in this assembly. It doesn't make any more sense than saying, "Because there's only one MP in the Yukon, there should only be one person in its Legislative Assembly."

I have yet to hear any argument presented by the members of the government party that deals with that. Are you suggesting that there should only be two members in the Northwest Territories assembly because it has only two MPs? It doesn't make any sense. I wouldn't argue this, but it might be argued that PEI should not be a separate province, since it has only 120,000 or so people. It might be argued, but as long as it is a province would anyone argue that it should only have four members in its Legislative Assembly because it only has four MPs? The government members take this rather frivolously.

I want to tell you that this is not a partisan issue in northern Ontario. Members of all political parties in the

north are very concerned about the size of the ridings. As I said, when the debate about redistribution was carried out in the House of Commons, certain members of the Liberal Party, MPs for ridings in the north, raised concerns. I have the Hansard from the committee hearings in the House of Commons. Mr Réginald Bélair, the member for Cochrane-Superior, objected to the redistribution affecting the size of that riding and the combination of that riding with another riding in the north.

"The commission failed to consider the special geographic considerations in Cochrane-Superior and particularly the problems of size, the distance between communities, the remoteness and isolation of communities, and the limited access constituents have to their member of Parliament. The commission failed to give adequate consideration to the demographics of the riding of Cochrane-Superior and erred in using an electoral quota as the sole factor for determining electoral districts."

Peter Thalheimer, the MP for Timmins-Chapleau, also raised concerns in the committee and said:

"The commission failed to respect the criterion that a proposed electoral district be of manageable size for sparsely populated northern regions of the province of Ontario. The commission failed to consider factors other than population figures when proposing rural and northern ridings, including historical, cultural, economic, transportation and communication patterns."

Mr Thalheimer was supporting Mr Belair's description of the special difficulties in servicing a northern riding, and he emphasized how isolated northern communities feel and how physically difficult it is to try to maintain personal contact between the MP and his or her constituents.

The fact that the federal government and the federal commission did not listen to these federal MPs who represent northern Ontario constituencies does not mean therefore that this assembly should ignore these very same concerns with regard to the size of provincial constituencies in northern Ontario. Why should we compound the error of the federal government and the federal electoral boundaries commission? Why is it that the members of the Conservative Party and the Conservative government seem hell-bent on ignoring these concerns? I don't understand it.

I believe the area of the 905 area code deserves more representation in this assembly. There are ridings with far too high populations for those people to have effective representation in this assembly. But to say that because we need to give them additional and more adequate representation we should therefore deny adequate representation to the north and establish ridings which will make it very difficult for those areas to have effective representation in this assembly is completely wrong.

I note that leading members of this government, when they were in opposition, have made these very same arguments in debates about possible reorganization of riding boundaries in the past. In October 1985 the now Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, the member for Parry Sound, stated: "Beyond population sizes, equally valid considerations should be taken into account. That is geography. We shouldn't just focus entirely on population." Mr Eves said in that debate in this assembly.

The member for S-D-G & East Grenville, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in a previous debate in this House in November 1992, debating a resolution that he had brought forward in the House representing rural Ontario, said, "We don't want to see rural Ontario underrepresented in this assembly." As a matter of fact, he said, "We should be increasing the number of rural ridings, not lowering them."

The Minister of Health, who I note is present in this assembly this afternoon, in November 1992, during that same debate, talked about the size of ridings and the problems of rural Ontario, and said, "We need more rural representation." He said that was paramount. I want to know what's changed.

Why is it that the Minister of Health now is supporting a legislative proposal that will do exactly what he said should not be done in 1992?

Why is that the Minister of Rural Affairs is abandoning the people of rural Ontario and saying: "No, we don't have to worry about adequate representation for rural Ontario any more in this House. We needed to back in 1992 but not in 1996"?

Why would the Deputy Premier say in 1985 that we should be looking at other issues beyond population and now do exactly the opposite as a member of the government? Where is the integrity on this issue?

The government has argued that there has to be change because it has to save money.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It's \$11 million.

Mr Wildman: They've indicated that this might save \$11 million. Well, why did you campaign on it when you said the opposite in 1992?

Hon Mr Wilson: Because we can work as hard as —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Order, the Minister of Health.

Mr Wildman: Why are you ignoring what these MPs said in northern Ontario about the federal redistribution, just the way the federal government did?

Hon Mr Wilson: Life is —

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Health, order, please. The member for Simcoe West, order, please.

Mr Wildman: I'm wondering if the member has grown in his views or whether he's practising situational ethics. I just wondered.

The members of the government have said we will save \$11 million because we'll have fewer MPPs in the House, and yet this is part of a piece. The other part of that piece is the referendum legislation that has been discussed by the Premier in the paper that he has put forward to the public, which has been debated in the committee of this House and which we've heard representations about. The argument is that you don't need as many representatives if you have the opportunity for direct democracy, so that the people themselves can vote and make decisions. But in terms of the cost, we were told in the committee by Mr Warren Bailie, the chief electoral officer of the province, that a referendum would cost about \$40 million — one referendum. He said the cost could be lowered to about \$23 million because of new electronic technologies, so we could lower the cost to \$23 million, so we'll have one referendum, which will

cost double your saving by cutting the number of MPPs. You've said \$11 million would be saved; one referendum will cost you \$23 million at the minimum. Where's the saving?

1540

The Minister of Health said we can work as hard as MPs. I think any of us can work as hard as MPs. I think the MPs generally work very hard. But the fact is that we have two MPs, Mr Bélair and Mr Thalheimer, representing the area of the province I come from who say they don't believe they can effectively represent their constituents with these boundaries. They don't think they can. They weren't listened to by their federal colleagues; they weren't listened to by the federal government. But why should we ignore that here to say, "The federal Liberals didn't listen, so the provincial Tories won't listen"?

It wasn't just these members of the cabinet who have made these arguments. In October 1985 the leader of the then third party, the now Premier of the province, stated that we have to look at communities of interest, that these must be mitigated. He argued that we shouldn't be mirroring federal boundaries at that time which would not take into account communities of interest. He talked particularly about a francophone community in his constituency of Nipissing. Why has the Premier now changed his view? Why is he no longer worried about community of interest? Why does he not care about the francophone constituents he cared about in 1985?

I close by pointing out that on September 30, 1996, the Sault Star, a newspaper that is not known for supporting many of my positions, stated that it's unfair for an MPP to have to be responsible for a constituency that stretches the distances of the new Algoma riding.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to go on record as saying to this House that it would do well to listen to the member for Algoma. He has served in this place for 20 years on behalf of a riding that to drive from one end to the other takes approximately eight hours. The riding as it now exists, as he suggested by the article he just finished reading and as pointed out in the Sault Star, is probably as big as, and in most cases bigger than, many countries in the world today.

He has served it with great distinction but he won't say this because he's a humble man. I will because I've known him for 20 years. He spends literally every weekend that he's away from this place, particularly when the House is sitting, away from his home and family, in places like Hornepayne, White River, Dubreuilville, Wawa, Blind River and Spragge serving his constituents, listening to what they have to say about the laws within which we all live, working for them to make sure that government is working on their behalf.

In the interest of simply the bottom line, to extend his riding so that it now becomes twice the size belies any logic. So I would respectfully suggest and ask all of you on the opposite side, because you ultimately will determine the course of events on this issue, to please pay attention and listen carefully to the comments of the member for Algoma, who knows from whence he speaks.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I am pleased to respond to the member for Algoma's comments on the

Fewer Politicians Act. I'd like to draw to his attention that he made some very good points and pleaded with a great deal of compassion for the people of northern Ontario and in some respects I agree with him.

But I look back to the long study and debate that has gone into coming up with the numbers by the federal electoral group in recommending 103 seats. To understand this, what I see from the people of Ontario is that when they call the constituency office today where I am in Durham East, they are often confused between provincial issues and federal issues. We're there to help them whether they're federal or provincial issues. We help them to solve the problems.

I really think they could address the areas and travelling distances in northern Ontario by making it up with the allowances that are given to members and members' staff to help them solve constituents' problems.

It's very clear the people of Ontario feel, whether it's correct or not, that they're overrepresented, that they're overgoverned and that there are far too many public politicians. In that respect this government made a commitment and that what's totally new. We didn't invent the 103 number but we're going to go along with the federal boundaries, which by the way are Liberal. We're not making it political; we're just going to implement that because we feel our members, as I'm sure members on the other side, are there to represent the people. We don't need more politicians.

I was reading an article recently that there are seven school boards in the Metropolitan Toronto area, and with those seven school boards there are 114 school trustees. Can you imagine it?

The people of Ontario are going to be very satisfied with this. I think we can address the difficulty and the duties of a member in the northern part of the province by allowing additional staff resources.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to offer some comments on the speech from the member for Algoma. One of the things people are missing is that when we hear the government side speak they seem to believe that this is rep by pop; it isn't. This is a number arrived at by the federal government, not in the context of Ontario but in the context of Canada. Surely members can understand that when Prince Edward Island can have four members of Parliament with a population not bigger than most ridings in Ontario, where we can have I think 32 members of the Legislature in Prince Edward Island, we're not talking sensibly when we just talk about rep by pop. The context of the federal Parliament prescribes how these boundaries are drawn.

I want to talk a little bit about exactly what's happening in northern Ontario. We are losing 50% of our rural representation. The city of Sault Ste Marie will have the same number of representatives. The city of Thunder Bay has the same number of representatives — Timmins, North Bay, Sudbury. But those people who live on 90% of the land mass of Ontario will now be represented by five MPPs. Think about it: five members of the Legislature, some of them representing an area a third of the province. I ask you in the name of democracy to rethink this. It might have been a good election slogan, it might have been easy to sell, but the reality is quite different. I think you should reconsider.

1550

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I want to take a moment to congratulate the member for Algoma in representing the area for the past 21 years. He did an excellent job of representing that area. I can recall back in 1988 doing door-to-door campaigning in the federal election and I can vouch for the fact that his riding is big provincially. It's also very big —

Interjections.

Mr Len Wood: I can hear the member for Durham East commenting. He was saying earlier that there's a lot of confusion in the heads of constituents; there seems to be a lot of confusion in the Conservative back benches on what they represent and who they represent.

The mayors and reeves in all of northern Ontario have taken the position that this Conservative government is basically slapping them across the face. They have no interest in listening to the representation from northern Ontario, and as a result the word "democracy" doesn't mean anything any more. Everything is going to be centred in the Premier's office. The decisions are going to be made by the member for Nipissing. He's going to make the final rulings, him and probably the finance minister and maybe a couple of other ministers. A handful of people are going to make the decision. Democracy is being destroyed.

As I heard the member for Algoma say, when you have a decision that is made by Canada on representation right across Canada, it doesn't necessarily apply to Ontario. They've decided that they're going to increase the members in Ontario from 99 to 103. Yet they're taking one member out of northern Ontario and they're adding it to southern Ontario because of a loss of population over the years. But it's going to be physically impossible and we're not going to have any democracy whatsoever by reducing northern Ontario by five members. I can say the same thing is probably happening in rural and southern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Algoma, you have two minutes.

Mr Wildman: I thank the member for Durham East, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Sault Ste Marie and the member for Cochrane North in making comments.

I don't think anybody here is particularly concerned about how difficult it may or may not be for MPPs in northern Ontario to properly represent their constituents because of the geographic size. I recognize that's not their concern, and frankly I don't think it really should be. What should be their concern is whether or not the people living, as my friend said, on 90% of the province's land mass are going to be able to have themselves heard in this assembly.

Just as we should be concerned about whether or not the people who live in ridings in Markham or the belt around the greater Toronto area will be properly represented because of the very large population sizes, we should be concerned in the same way about people who live in widely scattered communities over an enormous land mass. Don't just think about population; think about geography as well. Don't just follow the federal lead. I know you made a commitment in the election campaign.

Sometimes your commitments have to be modified when you look at the actual impacts, and I think the members should do that.

Without being too dramatic about it, I was thinking the other day in making this presentation about the prayer that is repeated by the Speaker on behalf of all members of the assembly before deliberation begins each day, written by my good friend, Fred Young, the member for Yorkview for many years in this assembly, where he said: "Give to each member of this assembly a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Guide us here in our deliberations. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve" —

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): It's my pleasure today to speak on Bill 81, known to some people as the Fewer Politicians Act. Before I begin my comments, I would like to make some remarks on the nickname for the act, the Fewer Politicians Act, which some members of the opposition have taken great offence to.

I want to say on behalf of the people I represent that when I speak to them in passing in my office and on the streets in my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay, I think there is some humour in the name of the act. I have been singled out as a member who is particularly affected by this act. I don't take offence at the name Fewer Politicians Act and I don't think my constituents do either. However, I can see that some politicians would take offence, but perhaps after years of being the butt of lawyers' jokes, I've become used to that kind of humour. Those are my comments on the name of the act.

Anyone who expresses surprise at this legislation or claims there hasn't been sufficient consultation certainly wasn't listening during the election campaign. The Common Sense Revolution was quite clear in its commitment to reduce the number of MPPs and to use the same boundaries used to elect federal MPs. As with many members, this legislation will have a direct impact on the riding I currently serve, but I believe, as I did during the campaign, that this is a change for the better and a change the people of Muskoka-Georgian Bay want to see.

This move will save money. After the next election there will be 27 fewer MPPs. That means taxpayers won't have to pay their salaries, expenses and staff. There could also be substantial saving in the area of election staffing, enumeration, mapping and administration. Indeed, many of my constituents, while consoling me at the apparent loss of a riding, have indicated that this makes so much common sense it could not have been designed by politicians.

Perhaps even more encouraging for the public is the fact that this system will eliminate much of the confusion which currently exists among constituents over federal and provincial jurisdiction and representation. By realigning provincial ridings to match federal boundaries, we're making it easier for voters to know who represents them at each level of government.

It has been suggested that the demands justify a higher number of provincial members than federal members. I've discussed this issue with my federal counterparts and

I simply do not accept the notion that federal members are more removed from their constituents. Federal MPs do not regularly spend their days sitting in Ottawa pondering changes to the Constitution, as some would suggest. In fact they routinely deal with constituency-level matters, which include pension, immigration and passport issues. They attend the same local events that I attend. The demands of the job are, in my opinion, roughly equal.

I'm certain that the people of Ontario can be effectively served by 103 members. Quite frankly, in our case, we consider quality to be more important than quantity.

During debate on this legislation, we've witnessed a number of members filing into the chamber with stacks of reference material in tow. I want to thank the members opposite who've provided me with arguments concerning the democratic process. However, I will remind them that two and a half years back, before the Common Sense Revolution was written, we consulted with the people of Ontario and asked them what changes were required to restore hope and prosperity to this province. People said government was too large, too costly. They asked for government that was smaller, more efficient and more affordable. They asked for fundamental change. These sentiments were confirmed during the election campaign and by the vote count.

This legislation is part of the fulfilment of a commitment to reduce the size of government at all levels. By realigning the provincial ridings to match the federal boundaries, we're making it easier for voters to know who represents them at each level of government. That offers potential for even greater saving by reducing duplication and overlap. It will also save Ontario the cost of holding its own redistribution commission.

Reducing the number of provincial politicians sends a strong signal that saving will start at the top and that everyone, including politicians, will share in the drive to become more efficient. Simply put, we are a government that believes in leading by example. This step, together with others we've taken since forming the government, means that restraint will be shouldered from the highest levels of Queen's Park on down. It proves once again that this government is not afraid to make tough decisions, even those that impact directly on the members themselves.

Reducing the number of MPPs by 20% will set an example of cost-cutting for other levels of government, including agencies and ministries, to follow. After all, we can't expect government bureaucrats to do better with less if we politicians aren't willing to do the same.

While every region across the province will benefit from this new plan, we also recognize that northern Ontario is unique. So although representation is based on population, northern Ontario ridings will have a smaller population. Under this plan, northern Ontario has been allotted two more ridings than it would have under a pure representation by population system. If my Liberal colleagues in opposition have concerns about this, perhaps they should talk to their Liberal cousins in Ottawa, the ones who set the boundaries.

I've enjoyed the debate on Bill 81. I had the opportunity to review Hansard and I saw that the member for

Algoma had asserted in an interjection, "You didn't win any seats in the north." This is a shocking untruth. I suppose I should check first with the resident historian, the member for the Barry's Bay historical society, on this point, but I doubt that there ever was an Ontario government with both the Premier and Deputy Premier from northern Ontario.

1600

I want to say a few things about large ridings. I currently represent a large riding. It's not as large as the member for Algoma's riding, but it is a large riding. It stretches all the way from Algonquin Park down to the bottom of Georgian Bay, where Midland is. It stretches from MacTier all the way down to Gravenhurst.

It is a challenge to represent a large riding, as the member for Algoma and many other members present know. However, I am confident that the boundaries that were designed by the federal government, and that we will follow, can be handled by provincial members, and I personally believe that this step is one that will be strongly supported throughout the province.

Now we have heard quite a history lesson from the member for Renfrew North. From my review of Hansard, we've heard about Premier Henry, Premier Ferguson, John A. Macdonald, Dalton Camp, John Ralston Saul, Professor Franks. The people in my riding are not preoccupied with the views of these figures, and neither am I. We've been told we shouldn't pander to the public mood, even if the public believes in those views viscerally. But I want to tell you, I have my dictionary with me today because in reviewing Hansard it was required so that I could understand some of the language which is not common in my riding.

One of the reasons I decided to get involved in politics, first at the school board level and now at this level, very much has to do with the idea of the public mood. I had grown sick and tired of elected officials who paid no respect to the commonly held views of the common people, and I believe the idea that we are pursuing in this legislation is one that is supported by the common people I represent.

The member for Renfrew North has talked about guts and how real politicians with guts don't pander to the talk show crowd. He used a lovely phrase, which I don't mind repeating: "They didn't do the easy thing when they stood up and bit into the strong wind of public opinion." He commented on Edmund Burke, who won a seat and then told his constituents that he took a different view from them, indicating that that was an example of courage.

Well, I take a different view. I take the view that the courage that is to be shown by a politician is shown before the election. You stand up, you state the position that you hold and you see where your constituents stand on that issue. If they elect you based on that policy, you should have the courage to carry it out. It is for that reason that I am supporting this legislation on behalf of the people I represent and in what I believe is the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): To the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, I listened to his

speech very carefully and again this member, just like any other member on the other side, is blaming the federal government. I thought when Mike Harris introduced his Common Sense Revolution he said that he didn't care what Ottawa was doing, he had his own agenda. This is what people in Ontario expected, especially from the boundary issue: They wanted to be consulted.

I realize it was in the Common Sense Revolution, but why choose a model that is not representative of Ontario? I thought that the Common Sense Revolution and Mr Harris would come back to us and say, "Look, after consultation—" or "I'll send out my people and we'll come back to this House with a model that is made in Ontario, maybe 115 or 120 seats." I realize that we need to scale back, we need to save dollars, but I don't think we should be saving dollars and putting aside people.

The member did mention that he wants to represent the common people in his riding. I want to tell you that by increasing the number of people in your riding — I don't know, maybe you're more efficient than just about everybody else in this House and you will do a better job. I don't know how you will do a better job with more people to serve. Also, when you refer to northern Ontario and you appreciate that they have larger ridings, I think northern Ontario needs the kind of representation we have at the present time and more.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I am very pleased to rise and congratulate and commend my colleague the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay for the fine presentation he gave this afternoon speaking on behalf of his constituents, as he always does in this House.

I am pleased to provide my comments on this bill. I haven't had a chance to speak at length, but I've got two minutes now to indicate my views as the member for Wellington. I'll certainly be supporting this bill in principle this afternoon when we have our vote, for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, I believe that as we go through this process we are now undertaking as a government, trying to reduce our expenditures to a sustainable level, such that we can stop borrowing money as a government, hopefully getting to the point where we can start running surpluses eventually in the year 2000 and start paying down some of the debt, we're asking a great many people in Ontario to sacrifice a great deal and certainly we have to provide leadership. By reducing our own numbers, to a great extent I think we're doing that. We have to apply those same standards of sacrifice to ourselves.

I have a number of reservations, though, about the bill and I'd be remiss if I didn't put some of those on the record. In the six years that I have represented the people of Wellington, I've known some very good people from all parties who sit in this House and do a very effective job of representing their constituents. I know that, as a result of this bill, some of those people will not be back representing their constituents in the future and I am saddened about that.

But I think the government has made a good point, that this idea was in the Common Sense Revolution. To some extent we have legitimacy for moving forward in this regard. We have a mandate to do it. I think we need

further discussion, though, so I am very pleased that the government is going to be sending this bill to a standing committee.

I also look at this bill as to the effect it has on the existing electoral district of Wellington. It splits our riding three ways and certainly, looking at it from the perspective of the member, I find some sadness about that because I've generated some pretty close bonds with all of the communities in my riding and I am sorry that apparently is going to be coming to an end. But on balance, I think this bill is necessary, required and I look forward to all members supporting it this afternoon.

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciated the comments of the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. I am perplexed, however. I am perplexed in understanding a member who represents a constituency as large as he does. I recognize it's large — tiny by comparison to the northern constituencies, but still a very large land mass with a lot of very important communities and a lot of differences between those communities. I think he would be the first to tell us that various communities within his constituency don't see the world quite the same way. That's because of geographical differences, differences in employment, differences in the economy, differences all across a large riding like he represents.

What we're suggesting over here is that this Conservative government consider what happens following this redistribution. There's a huge shift in power, in seats and influence to the urban areas, a huge shift out of not just the north, but the rural parts of southwestern Ontario and the rural parts of eastern Ontario. This isn't compensated as it is within the federal Parliament by provinces like Saskatchewan or even Alberta, which have large numbers of rural seats which in the national context balance it. It doesn't happen here because this is an Ottawa solution, based on the Canadian context.

What we are seeing is a small piece of the puzzle of electoral redistribution at the federal level just laid on Ontarians, saying: "It'll work here." Well, it's not going to work for my constituents and it's not going to work for most of the rural constituents in Ontario.

Mr Len Wood: I listened very attentively to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay in his comments, saying that he supports the piece of legislation that everybody thinks is a big joke across Ontario, the Fewer Politicians Act.

If you're talking to the people who live in 85% of the land mass in the province of Ontario, who are losing large representation in what should be a democracy system, they feel that it's very unfair. They live in four fifths of the geographic area of the province and their representation is being reduced down to 10 from 15.

1610

Some of them asked the question: "There are 15 members there now. How many are Conservative?" The answer is, there's only one and he's in Nipissing. The other 14 are split between the Liberals and the NDP. They're saying, "Why would a government not send this out to the election commission and let them have public hearings and come up with a system that is based on Ontario?" rather than just saying the federal government under Brian Mulroney recommended redistribution and

this is what they did. The Liberals came into government and they increased it from 99 to 103 but took representation out of northern Ontario because of the population that is shrinking; in southern Ontario it's growing.

The federal government is increasing the amount of members, and yet here in Ontario we see them using what was considered to be a solution for Canada, to increase the amount of members at Ottawa, and here in Ontario they're saying we're going to reduce it in Ontario and we're only going to give a voice to the large urban areas in this province. The other people are not going to have a voice. Democracy is dead in Ontario if this bill goes through.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, you have two minutes.

Mr Grimmett: I want to thank the members for Cochrane North, Ottawa East, Wellington and Algoma ridings for their comments. I'll just respond to them in the order that they spoke.

With respect to the comments of the member for Ottawa East, I think he's missing the point with respect to the potential saving that flows from this bill, particularly in the use of the same boundaries that the federal government has. It makes a great deal of sense to all the people I've spoken to in my riding to use the same boundaries. We can save with respect to election staffing, enumeration; no need to go through the process twice every time there are provincial and federal elections.

I understand the comments of the member for Wellington with respect to the potential loss of some members, but as has been said by the Chair of the Management Board in his opening remarks at the introduction of the bill, ridings don't belong to the members, they belong to the public, and it is up to the public to determine through the election of a government how they're going to proceed with policy. I am eager to follow the bill through committee and see what comments come from the public.

With respect to the comments of the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I agree with his remarks that there is a great diversity of views in a large riding and I would say that the only area you would find a wider diversity of viewpoints and possibly cultural differences than in a large rural riding would be in a small, densely populated urban riding, which in many cases has even greater diversity of views and cultural perspectives.

With respect to the member for Cochrane North, the points have been very well made with respect to northern Ontario and how there are concerns about representation. However, I don't believe it would be practical to move to a system where all the ridings were the same size, which seems to be the ultimate viewpoint expressed by some of the members opposite.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): I'm pleased to take part in this debate this afternoon as well, when we take a look at what we are doing in essence in terms of representation in the province of Ontario. I don't think this is a debate about our riding or which MPP will challenge the other MPP in the next provincial election. I think this has got to be a debate based around fair representation.

I would just like to take a look at fairness and what we should be looking at in terms of ensuring that we don't

have 90% of the entire land mass of the province represented by only five MPPs. The former speaker spoke of the history and going back into history to see what other people thought of representation in Ontario. I went back and took a look at what the present government, the present cabinet, had to say. This was in a commission on the boundary changes that was put forth in 1985.

If we take a look at what the present Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs had to say at that time, we see that he said: "We do not want to see the rural part of Ontario further underrepresented.... We must retain the status quo intact.... Rural Ontario must have more, not less, representation." Again, this is a cabinet minister in the present government talking back in 1985, where he actually said we must see that rural Ontario have more and not less representation.

Of course, it's been brought to the attention of the House a good number of times that 90% of the provincial land mass, rural Ontario, will be reduced to five MPPs under this plan. I have to agree with what the now Minister of Agriculture had to say back then, that the people of rural Ontario deserve that fairness I speak about.

Let's go on to take a look at what the present Solicitor General had to say back then in terms of boundary changes to the commission at that time.

Mr Michael Brown: Mr Runciman.

Mr Mclash: Mr Runciman, of course, the present Solicitor General. He started off by saying:

"In terms of the criteria outlined for the commission when it was arriving at the boundary changes — perhaps it is the fault of the Legislature — I do not think it took a close look at rural ridings in respect of the number of municipalities a member representing a rural riding is responsible for. I have 15 municipalities in my riding, and the changes will add another four municipalities. I think the workload perhaps is not adequately recognized by the commission."

Well, 15 and four is 19 municipalities. When I take a look at what we will do in terms of combining the current Rainy River riding, which I'll speak about later, we're taking into account 50 first nation communities alone, not 19 municipalities but 25 municipalities, 15 major communities. So we go back to his statements there.

When I take a look at what will happen in terms of the riding farthest away from Queen's Park, and of course that riding borders on the boundary of Manitoba, what will become of the Kenora riding when it becomes the Kenora-Rainy River riding and takes on a part of Lake Nipigon, I don't think there are a lot of members in the House — I asked the government House leader, when he introduced the bill, how far it is from Rainy River to Fort Severn. It is farther from Rainy River to Fort Severn than it is for the majority of these members to go home from here. We're talking 700 kilometres from one corner of that riding to the other. I don't think a lot of MPPs here today, MPPs who campaigned on what they say is their Common Sense Revolution, the plan that said this would happen, actually realized that and realized the impact that would have in northern Ontario.

We heard from the member for Mississauga South, now the PC caucus chair, the other day. I had to think

back to what she represented, an area that she could walk around, an area with one municipality in it, one local government. I go back to take a look at some of the things she said in 1985 when this was debated. She said, "If the people of Ontario are serviced to the maximum ability of the elected representatives because the boundaries of their ridings facilitate the service of those people and the equity of distribution of population as far as possible, then those are the aspects the electoral boundaries commission should consider." I go back: "Those are the aspects that the boundaries should consider." She went on to talk about effective representation and how effective representation could be provided but not to overdo it in terms of actual territory.

The last thing I want to say is that it's not possible. It will certainly be a challenge. I for one, if this government does not change its mind, would look forward to that challenge. Again, we have to go back to the key point: It's how fair we are to the folks throughout that region in terms of representation here in Parliament and what will happen at that point.

1620

Let me just take a look at what the Premier was saying in northern Ontario during the last campaign. As we all know, he came out with a document, *A Voice for the North*. I'm sure — as a matter of fact, I'm more than sure — that a good number of members in this House never saw that document. It was a document directed to the north. He states right in there, "As a northerner, I know how important it is that we hear directly from you" — the constituents. The Premier indicated that. Then he went on to say:

"The people of northern Ontario have given us a clear message: Their needs and concerns are not being met by the provincial government. They feel left out of the decision-making process. Inappropriate and unnecessary laws and regulations, designed to meet the concerns of the urban south, are being imposed on them.

"Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party are prepared to act."

In essence what he has done is he has acted. He's lessened that voice, lessened that representation which he suggested we needed in the north. That was the Premier speaking in his own document. I know for a fact that I can't suggest that the Premier was misleading the people of northern Ontario, but what I can say is that he seems to have had a different message up there than he had here in southern Ontario, and as has been indicated, he has possibly moved to southern Ontario even though he still represents a riding in northern Ontario.

Earlier on in question period today we found out he couldn't answer a very specific question I had that pertained to his own riding in northern Ontario. I would like to see the entourage he travels with that he has to refer a specific question regarding a hospital in his riding to the Minister of Health. I'm sure the Minister of Health would possibly be beside the Premier at all times when he's in his riding because obviously the Premier does not know what's going on in that northern riding, as he's neglected the rest of the north after indicating in *A Voice for the North* that he would be prepared to act in terms of hearing the concerns of northerners and in terms of effective representation there.

We heard in the *Common Sense Revolution* — and we go back to this document of documents — that representation would be changed. It was a very convenient way of doing it, just to conform to the federal riding boundaries; very simple in the minds of the electorate out there. Some say people get confused. I can say that I can go to my riding any time and people will know whether I represent them or whether the member from the next riding represents them, and they will know who their federal member is. It's very seldom that you'll find a person who doesn't know that. They may get mixed up in terms of certain issues and who to go to, but that's normally not the case. I think we in the north find that our constituents rely on a lot of our office help because they can't go down the street to a minister's office, a ministry office, to find out the answers. They look to us for what we're doing in the north and what we're all about in terms of representation.

I often like to go back to what the people in the north were actually hearing during the campaign. This is from an article in the *Fort Frances Times*. This is what the PC candidate was telling her constituents. I must make this very clear: She was the candidate running against Mr Hampton, who is now the leader of the NDP. "PC candidate Lynn Beyak certainly pooh-poohed that scenario in the final days of the campaign" — we're talking about redistribution — "claiming any talk of the ultimate demise of the Rainy River riding was 'fearmongering by desperate politicians.'"

This is what your candidate was telling the folks of Rainy River. This is what she was saying during the campaign. Yes, she was looking at the document *A Voice for the North*. Yes, she knew that the Premier had indicated to the people of the north that they were prepared to act on things that weren't happening for northerners, but then she goes on to say, "In fact, Lynn told voters at an all-candidates meeting here that she'd fight such a suggestion tooth and nail." Where is that candidate today? I don't hear from her today, fighting such a suggestion that the Rainy River riding would be combined with the Kenora riding "tooth and nail." I ask Lynn Beyak, where is she today when the Premier has actually instituted this?

One good thing about what we're doing here, and I have to give credit to the House leaders of both opposition parties, is that we've finally got the government to agree to allow this to go out, to hear people such as Lynn Beyak. The hearings will travel to Dryden, and I am certainly going to be one to encourage the former PC candidate in the Rainy River riding to come out and fight this suggestion tooth and nail, because she promised the people of that particular riding that this would not happen.

She goes on to say that the *Common Sense Revolution* clearly stated that new boundaries in the province will be discussed "in direct partnership with all Ontarians." So at one time she says, "No, no, this will not happen," she will fight it tooth and nail, and then she goes on to say that it will be discussed "in direct partnership with all Ontarians."

I must say that when I listen to the members from the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Com-

merce, they tell me this is truly going in the direction of less representation not only in northern Ontario, as I say, but in rural Ontario as well. I hope that when the committee actually travels to Dryden, these folks will be there, that Lynn Beyak will be there to fight, as she said, tooth and nail the demise of the Rainy River riding, as she indicated.

We talk about the responsibilities. Yes, our federal members work very hard. Yes, they do attend a good number of the events that we're at. We're there together quite often. They do quite often say that these ridings are extremely large, extremely hard to cover. I've heard that from a number of northern federal politicians. I can't believe for one moment that when the federal government decided on their boundaries, they had northern Ontario in mind, because the area we're talking about in northern Ontario is extremely large.

I was speaking to a reporter the other day. They were asking about the responsibility aspect of, "What do you, as a provincial member, do in terms of what a federal member will do acting on behalf of the constituents in that particular riding?" I said to him, "All you have to do is refer to the phone book." So that's what we did. We went and took a look in the Kenora phone book. Do you know what we found? We found that there were six pages of different provincial ministries, provincial ministries that would reflect on the provincial member. If there were problems with that ministry, problems with the people who were in those offices, they would come back to me. When we took a look at the federal end of it, we found there were two pages in the phone book. He said: "That's a good way of looking at it. You certainly are closer to the people within the riding." I agreed with him, saying, "Yes, we are." I've always said that the local town council, the local mayor or reeve, are the closest to the people, but I've also said I think we are the second closest.

Again, just by that little example, he took a look at the responsibilities that we as MPPs have in terms of education, health care, roads. We hear about our roads all the time, our local schools, our municipalities, our natural resources, environment, WCB — I can go on and on. We, as provincial members, are not dealing with helicopters and submarines; we're dealing with meat-and-potato issues that people face every single day. It's not really an impossible challenge, but it certainly is a challenge. I've been known to rise to challenges before and I certainly look forward to rising to such a challenge. But again, it all goes back to fairness. Is this truly, truly fair to the people of rural and northern Ontario?

A map was brought to my attention just the other day. It's a map that indicates the province of Ontario and it has the regions of the province indicated on it. I took a look at this map and I couldn't believe it. This is the province of Ontario, a map used by many ministries. This happened to come from the Ministry of the Attorney General when they were taking a look at the areas.

I took a look at what they indicated as the Kenora district on this map. I followed it around, around James Bay, Hudson Bay and back down to Rainy River. Then I took a look at Lake Superior. Folks, on a normal map, Lake Superior would be five or six times the size of the

area as indicated on this provincial map. Here they have it indicated as the entire region being twice the size of Lake Superior. So right there we're giving the people the wrong view in terms of anybody looking at this map: "Oh, well, the Kenora region, that's very small. Look at Lake Superior; it's maybe twice the size." It's not the case. This is just one example of how people in southern Ontario do not understand the geography and the needs of northern Ontario.

1630

When we take a look at what we're talking about here, we're taking a look at the province as a whole, the provincial land mass. In essence, what the Premier has decided to do is to give one member out of 103 members in the Legislature one third of the provincial land mass. That doesn't make any sense to me: one third of the entire provincial land mass to one member. Again, I go back to the figure of 337,000 square kilometres, twice the size of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia put together.

I think Mike Harris is going to have to take a look at this and I sincerely hope when the committee reports back from being in Dryden, being in Sault St Marie, being in Timmins, if that's where they choose to go — but we certainly look forward to them being in Dryden — they take a look at whether this Mike Harris plan really parallels what the federal government did. The federal government made allowances for places such as the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and they made those allowances when they took a look at their redistribution.

But again I go back to the actual size, the geography that we talk about. A lot of people here in the House, a lot of people in Ontario, do not realize it takes two days for a person to leave Queen's Park here and get to my riding, two full days of travelling. You can be in Florida quicker. Then when you get there, you have a land mass which this Premier plans on giving to one member out of 103, one third of the entire province. The population and the geography just do not add up to what the Premier wants to do.

I was interested in what the government House leader had to say during his opening remarks. This is of course Mr Johnson. The House leader indicated, "All regions across the province will benefit from the new plan. We recognize, however, that northern Ontario is unique. Representation is based on population and the northern Ontario ridings will have smaller populations than the ridings in southern Ontario. We recognize that situation." "We recognize the uniqueness of that situation," is what he's saying.

I just want to say in summation, because I don't intend to take much time today, that I'm interested in the comments of members from all parties on all sides of the House. So I hope the House leader was giving us a commitment when he said that he was interested in the comments of not only myself but all the members in the House.

We've heard a good number of government members themselves, some of them present here today, say they understand that there is a difference, there is a uniqueness between the large land masses and the highly populated

areas, the large land masses of northern Ontario and the highly populated areas of the Golden Horseshoe. With all sincerity, I hope they pay attention to what the committee hears and think back to what I've indicated in terms of what we were hearing in the north during what Mike Harris was saying in his Common Sense Revolution. I don't think they understand that Mike Harris was giving his views to northern Ontario in a different document, in a document that I'm more than sure a good majority of the members in this House did not know anything about, a document entitled *A Voice for the North*.

If the members of the House would only listen not only to the MPPs who represent the north, who represent rural regions in the province, but also to what the chambers of commerce are saying and to what the mayor of Kenora and the mayor of Sioux Lookout are saying. I'm sure when they travel to Dryden, they will be hearing from these folks. It's one thing to hear them, but it's another thing to be sure to listen to them and to bring back those views to Mr Harris, who went around the north saying that we needed proper representation in the north and that previous governments weren't acting on behalf of northern Ontario and that with a Mike Harris government this would change. Unfortunately, I think if he continues on with this plan, it will certainly be a change, but a change for the worse.

In summing up, I would just like to read a letter. This is a letter written by the mayor of Sioux Lookout, Mr Hubert Morrison. I think this sums up the views of a good number of folk in the northwest, whether they be elected, part of a chamber or a constituent, the people I initially started talking about in terms of fairness. It's a letter directed to Premier Mike Harris and he says:

"Dear Mr Harris:

"As the mayor of Sioux Lookout, a small municipality in northwestern Ontario, I was appalled and dismayed to learn that your government proposes to combine the Kenora and Rainy River ridings. With a combined riding, there would be one elected representative from an area encompassing one third of Ontario's land mass. If this legislation becomes law it will effectively reduce northern Ontario's representation in the Legislature."

This is not what the mayor heard in *A Voice for the North* from the Premier. It's all right here, folks. This is not what the mayor was hearing when Lynn Beyak was out there saying she would fight this tooth and nail and that the other candidates were just fearmongering. That's not what the mayor heard. It goes on to say:

"During your election campaign northern Ontario was promised a greater say. Instead, we are facing a much-reduced voice in the Legislature. The suggestion that an area larger than Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick combined can be adequately represented by one individual is an insult to the residents in the north."

"An insult to the residents of the north": The mayor is feeling a little bit misled because that's not what he was hearing during the campaign, during his review of *A Voice for the North*.

"While there may be few people living in northern Ontario, this area does contribute a substantial amount to the coffers of the province through its natural resources.

The residents of this area deserve the respect and recognition of this contribution. This can best be demonstrated by retaining or increasing the number of ridings presently in place in this area."

The mayor goes on to say that yes, there are few people living in the north, but the rest of the province has to understand the contribution, whether it be mining resources, forest resources or tourism, that this area in the north makes to the province.

I have to say, Mr Speaker — and you may have heard it — that I was on a local radio show here a couple of weeks ago and I was just totally disgusted when one of the callers suggested that "trees don't vote." There was one caller who just did not understand the economic spinoff that we give the province in terms of our natural resources. The mayor goes on to say:

"On behalf of the council and the residents of Sioux Lookout, I strongly recommend that both the Kenora district and the Rainy River district remain as individual ridings. This would support your promise that northern residents would have a greater say than in the past."

The mayor at the time was reading from the same document that your candidates were defending, *A Voice for the North*. He goes back and he asks the Premier in this letter to support that very important promise that he made to the citizens of northern Ontario that their voice would not be taken away.

I think that is a letter that reflects all of the mayors' views in northern Ontario. I hear it as I go from municipality to municipality, because they know, as the local government — as the government, as I said, that is closer to the constituents than we are because they're the ones who sit in the coffee shop every morning to listen to the local concerns — they know how important it is to have effective representation of areas throughout rural and northern Ontario. That is just one letter from the mayor of Sioux Lookout.

I'd just like to wrap up and say that I'm encouraged a little bit, and I go back to the fact that our government House leader and the House leader of the third party have negotiated a deal with the government House leader who, as I indicated earlier, I really don't think has an idea of what this particular piece of legislation will do. I'm encouraged by the fact that, given his comments from Hansard that I indicated during my remarks, he is looking forward to hearing with much interest the comments of all members of the House.

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I'm encouraged to know that after second reading this legislation will go to committee and that the committee will travel throughout northern Ontario. My main point there is that when they go to northern Ontario I hope they are able to listen carefully to the concerns of the people in northern Ontario; listen to, as I indicated earlier, the PC candidate from Rainy River, who said she would fight this tooth and nail based on what the Premier had told her in his document *A Voice for the North*.

I hope they will listen carefully and bring back to people such as the Premier, the Deputy Premier, who's also a northerner, and the government House leader those very specific views they will hear not only from municipal representatives but from citizens, whether they be

chamber citizens, private individuals or individuals we help through our offices on a regular basis, that they will listen to the message they are given in Dryden and ensure that what they bring back to the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the House leader is clear. I know they are looking for this information and I hope they will recognize that this was a plan that sounded very good: "fewer politicians." Even the title of the act indicating fewer politicians sounded good, in a time of restraint, to the folks of Ontario. It was something that could easily sell and it obviously sold well here in southern Ontario.

Folks, if you haven't yet read the document, *A Voice for the North*, I hope you would at least give us the consideration, the decency to go back and find out what your Premier told the folks in northern Ontario who were going to elect a representative, and I can't stress this enough: "As a northerner, I know how important it is that we hear directly from you." He went on to say, "Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party are prepared to act" on decisions that would be made in an appropriate fashion by northerners for northerners.

I challenge all the members who have not yet seen that document to get hold of it. I've got extra copies here. If they wish, they can take a look at copies I have. Take a look at what Mike Harris, a northerner himself, was saying in terms of representation in both rural and northern Ontario and I think you'll walk away from here with a different perspective of the bill of goods we were sold in northern Ontario compared to what people in southern Ontario heard.

Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to partake in the debate here today. I just hope the government members are listening very carefully.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Len Wood: Given the huge riding the member for Kenora has now and the fact that it's going to double in size, I recognize his concern about how democracy will be eliminated in large parts of the geographic area of Ontario when you reduce the amount of representation there. Their voice will not be heard at Queen's Park because it's physically impossible to represent some of those areas.

I don't think any Conservative, Liberal or NDP members are concerned about their own political future, but what they are speaking out about, especially the opposition party and the third party, is that democracy is being eroded by suggesting that fewer politicians can do a better job of representing their particular areas. It was never true in the past and it can never be true in the future that if you have to travel by road an initial five or six hours because your riding is being expanded, you are going to be able to do a better job of representing your area.

As I said earlier when I commented on the member for Algoma, there is a lot of anger and frustration. We've seen some of the anger and frustration and feeling last Friday and Saturday when 200,000 or 300,000 people marched down University Avenue and assembled here in front of Queen's Park to give loud voice that democracy is being eroded. When we're looking at the fewer politicians bill, it's a joke to think you're going to save a few dollars by having fewer politicians at Queen's Park but

democracy is going to be lost right across the province. I'd like to congratulate the member for Kenora in standing up and demanding public hearings across the province.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): It's with some pleasure that I join the debate. I thought I would add what I am hearing in the Niagara Peninsula, in particular in the riding of Niagara South, about this issue. The previous comments from the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay rang very true and resonate in my riding, in that the government is leading by example. If we're asking the bureaucracies and our transfer partners to do better with less, it only stands to reason that we as politicians, as the leaders at the provincial level, should likewise do better with fewer numbers.

I remember the member for Welland-Thorold commented in the Welland Tribune that Niagara would somehow be losing representation, a similar argument as that being used by my northern colleagues. It would be four and a half members, down from six, in the next election, but if you divide that four and a half into the number of new members, 103 as opposed to 130, the percentage representation is pretty well the same.

What I expect to see, if there are some showdowns in the peninsula, is a higher quality representation. To give some credit to John Maloney, the federal member in Erie riding — it covers a larger land area than I do and perhaps the same area in the next election — I think John does an excellent job and I disagree strongly with some of the statements across the floor because he is very close to the people and does a good job attending the same events I do. I am confident that if I am re-elected, if I choose to run again, I will try to represent that large area equally well.

Another observation, and this is for Niagara and no disrespect to the northern members because it may be a different situation up there: The people who tend to talk the most about this issue are politicians because they get excited and like to talk about what the big showdowns are going to be next time. Is it going to be Brown against Wildman or what is going to happen? And the journalists like to talk about this.

Outside of that, the majority of people knew we were going to do this. It was in the Common Sense Revolution. I believe the majority of people in Niagara South at least know why the government is doing this and fully support this leadership from the top.

Mr Michael Brown: H.L. Mencken once said, "For every complex problem, there's a simple but wrong solution." I think that is what's being pointed out here today in the Legislature by my good friend from Kenora. It was a thoughtful speech, a significant speech and a speech by a member who is held by his colleagues in the highest of esteem, a member who is known for his constituency work, a member who works as hard or harder than anybody I know, and who brings those very interests of the Kenora riding as it presently exists into the Liberal caucus and into the Legislature in a most effective way.

What Mr Miclash is saying to you is not that he's worried about Mr Miclash; he's worried that the people of a geographic area one third of the province will not be

able to have their democratic rights exercised in this place on the basis of just sheer geography. It was true, I heard a member over on the other side say: "Maybe metropolitan area ridings are as difficult to represent. They have a huge diversity of views in some very small areas." The difference of course is that you can move between meetings in five minutes. Seven hundred kilometres from one end to the other: That's amazing. People are going to be denied their democratic right to be heard in an effective fashion by the legislation that's being put forward. Our argument is not that there should not be fewer politicians; our argument is that redistribution, the way it is defined in Ontario by this bill, precludes democracy.

1650

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions or comments? If not, the member for Kenora, you have two minutes.

Mr Miclash: Let me thank the members for Cochrane North, Niagara South and Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments. I would just like to pick up on some of the things they have said.

The member for Cochrane North — we of course are both from northern Ontario and we certainly share the same views when it comes to redistribution. When he talks about doing more for less, I think he makes a very, very good point. When you hear about the distances, you hear about the 700 kilometres from one end of the riding to the other, you can almost see this is a case where it's not going to be fair to those for whom we are trying to do more for less, to the folks we represent. Again, it sort of revolves around a matter of fairness.

I hope the member for Niagara South has read the document *A Voice for the North*, one that was put out particularly for northern Ontario. If he hasn't, I suggest he does, because in that document Mr Harris, the now Premier of this province, indicated that we were not getting fair representation in the north and that his government was prepared to act. As I indicated earlier, how they decided to act was to take representation out of the north, out of northern Ontario. That is not what your candidates were saying, that's not what they were selling in the last campaign. I have to emphasize that.

In wrapping up, I would just like to thank my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin for his very kind remarks. He too stated very clearly about how this is the erosion of the democratic rights of those folks who are going to be located in some of those very large land masses. I would just like to wrap up by thanking all the members for commenting on my delivery to the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ed Doyle): Further debate?

Mr Len Wood: I want to add my comments today to the legislation that's before the House, Bill 81, which is the Fewer Politicians Act. I would just like to say in starting off that this is a bill that is an attack on democracy in Ontario. It's an attack on the fundamentals of democracy right across Ontario.

We've heard the previous speaker say that when the Premier, who was leader of the third party at that time, was touring northern Ontario before the election he was going to make sure there was a voice for the north, and now quite clearly he's decided it's time to remove that voice from the north. There is a lot of anger and frustra-

tion from not only the mayors and reeves but the general population out there, saying, why would a political party try to change the boundaries and make them look like the new federal boundaries are going to be without going through the Ontario election commission and have public hearings and have a good debate on how the boundaries should look and how the representation should be right across Ontario?

Because I was born and raised in southern Ontario, I know the large masses of rural southern Ontario that are going to be very difficult to represent compared to some of the areas in the high urban areas where you can basically ride a bicycle around the riding in half an hour or 20 minutes; whereas in my particular riding of Cochrane North — and I have the good fortune of living almost within the riding. If I was to live in Hearst I'd be right in the centre of Ontario, but in Kapuskasing I have communities on both sides of that, and it takes a large amount of time. Whether it was René Piché, who was the Conservative before, or René Brunelle, who was the Conservative representing the area, I'm sure they will get the views from them, or René Fontaine, who was a Liberal, that the area was a huge area before and now by going by the new boundaries, which from what I can gather were initiated by Brian Mulroney before he left as Prime Minister and turned it over to Kim Campbell, were being discussed at that time. Then the Liberal government in Ottawa decided they would juggle around a little bit, but not that much, and ended up increasing the members' representation in Ottawa from 99 to 103. At the same time they removed one MP from northern Ontario.

In this particular legislation we see that a total of five MPPs are going to be removed from northern Ontario. That means you're going to have two representatives covering the area from North Bay to Longlac and all the way up to Hudson Bay and the James Bay coast. You're taking three huge ridings and making them into two huger ridings, and I'm only talking about that particular area.

I said earlier in my two-minute response that I don't get the feeling from talking to provincial MPPs or federal MPs throughout northern Ontario that they are concerned about their personal jobs being at stake but about the eroding of democracy. I'm glad to see that the Premier is here to listen to some of the comments when democracy is being eroded, eliminated in Ontario and you see hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets and march to try to return to democracy. The legislation we're dealing with here is an example of how much further democracy is being eliminated in Ontario, or made into a joke, where representation is going to be completely eroded and taken away.

I could go into all kinds of quotations that have shown up in all the newspapers in northern Ontario. I could start off with the town of Hearst. Jean-Marie Blier, the mayor of Hearst, is very disappointed that from one end of the new riding to the other it will be a return drive by car of about seven hours if you follow the speed limit. That's without having any meetings with either your provincial or federal member of parliament.

The two federal members, Bélair and Thalheimer, who represent that particular area now, say it's going to be

physically impossible to continue to represent those large areas as they're being made larger. Imagine that from Smooth Rock Falls to North Bay is going to be called one riding, Cochrane-Timiskaming. That's an enormous amount of time spent behind the wheel and travelling.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): The riding of northeastern Ontario.

Mr Len Wood: Northeastern Ontario, exactly. Then you have from Smooth Rock Falls to Longlac. It's going to become another riding. In addition to that you're going to have Moosonee, Moose Factory, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Peawanuck and Ogoki as well as Conscious Lake and Newpost, all in this trying to represent remote areas as well as the large land masses. Just because there is less population in northern Ontario, that does not mean we shouldn't have some type of democracy. What we're leading to is a detrimental situation.

You hear people campaigning and saying, "The previous government over the last 10 years, whether it was NDP or Liberal, was not speaking for the north and not representing the north; we're going to have a voice for the north." Now you find out that you have more potholes and it's hard to travel on the roads — the roads are not plowed properly in the wintertime, so you're stranded for two or three days at a time. At the same time we're going to have fewer MPPs representing the particular area.

It's kind of ironic that if we go back to 1991 and 1992, when some of these discussions were taking place, Noble Villeneuve, Mike Harris, Margaret Marland and a number of these people, the now health minister, were saying there should be more representation in Ontario. Now, as a result of a silly document that was brought forward — I call it the NonSense Revolution — based on the American style of doing things, they're going to reduce the amount of it. It's sad and it's very frustrating for the people all across the province, especially in rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

1700

The mayor in the town of Cochrane, Mayor Hughes — and I'm sure Premier Mike Harris is well aware of the name —

Mr Miclash: He paid \$150 for a fund-raiser?

Mr Len Wood: Yes. From the mayor of Cochrane, and it's a quote in the Timmins press: "It's a slap in the face for northern Ontario to think that the Premier would even do that. Representation based on population is not realistic for the north, which, despite having a small population, represents four fifths of the geographical land mass of Ontario." Yet we're seeing that the present Tory government is going to continue to ram ahead with their legislation and it's a joke, the title that they call it, "fewer politicians."

I attended a meeting in Cochrane last Saturday, the OMA meeting, and this topic came up. There wasn't a single person in the room, representing all of the areas from Timmins, Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Moonbeam, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Opasatika — all of these communities were very much opposed to that. They're saying, "If this happens, does that mean we're going to have large geographic areas amalgamated and democracy is going to disappear within municipal politics?" I said, "That's exactly the way we're heading." This government

at Queen's Park does not believe in government. It believes in eliminating most of the government administration that we have out there. One way of doing it is to eliminate the democracy that we see out there.

There have been a fair number of other speakers who have gone on the record prior to me, making comments very similar to the comments we're hearing out there, and many northerners have expressed a concern about the treatment that the region has received from the new Tory regime. Now this government is supposed to be doing something about it, the government is going to make sure that there will be five fewer ridings at Queen's Park.

This is not what was promised during the election campaign. In the election campaign, we saw all kinds of pamphlets being passed around. As a matter of fact, I can recall the now Premier Mike Harris was in Kapuskasing twice. "Not one penny is going to be taken out of health care," and yet now we find out they're going to close 30 beds in the hospital in Kapuskasing, they're going to close 18 in Hearst, they're going to close 10 in Smooth Rock Falls, and probably another 15 or 20 in Cochrane. So you're talking about 100 beds that are being taken out of there. That's in addition to the five politicians that they're going to take out of northern Ontario.

There's no guarantee that any of this money is going to come back or stay within the riding. There are going to be thousands of nurses thrown out of work throughout the province and probably a few hundred of them are going to be within Cochrane North and Cochrane South and the new riding that will be Timmins-James Bay or the other riding that is going to be Cochrane-Timiskaming. All of the health care system is under attack. But in the spring of 1995 when the election campaign was on: "Not a penny is going to come out of it. Not a penny is going to come out of health care."

When we're talking about the present Bill 81 being here, that's only part of the broken promises that people are aware of that is happening out there. They probably never would have ended up with a majority government in Ontario had they known they were going to destroy education in Ontario, destroy the health care system and reduce the amount of representation there is at Queen's Park, because the saving is very little.

By reducing 27 politicians, you're going to save, from their figures, about \$11 million. The member for Algoma earlier talked about a referendum. If you were to go out and see what the people in the province of Ontario want, a referendum in Ontario costs about \$40 million. With the technology they have now, you could probably do it for, according to his figures, about \$23 million. But still, a referendum is double the cost of what you're saving in eliminating the democracy system in Ontario.

I'll go back quite clearly to the frustration and the anger that is building up throughout all of Ontario, as we've seen from the march. There are different arguments over the numbers of people who were there, but any time that there are 100,000 or 150,000 or 200,000 or whatever it is marching with their feet and showing that they want democracy to come back in Ontario, they want democracy there. They do not want the attitude that they've seen over the last 16 months. We've never seen those types of demonstrations in Ontario and still the government in power not listen.

The Premier makes all kinds of jokes about various ethnic groups out there, because I know the discussion took place in question period today that he doesn't take it seriously.

Back in 1992 — and I was sitting here in government — the Harris Conservatives introduced a resolution asking for a limit to the geographic area of ridings in Ontario. They had argued that it was necessary to reflect the special circumstances and requirements of representation between rural and urban electoral districts. This is 1992 when they brought a resolution to the floor. There were 16 members in the third party at that time. What they were arguing for then is completely contrary to what they are saying they're going to do now. The thanks that they give for being elected as a majority government is saying: "Don't pay any attention. What we said in 1991 or 1992 or 1993 doesn't hold any water. It doesn't count, because now we have a majority government and we can do whatever we want. We don't have to consult with anybody, and we'll just ram through the legislation" — the same as they did with Bill 26, the bully bill. From what they're saying now in 1996, it's quite obvious that they are creating constituencies that are larger than over 60 countries and 45 of the 50 US states. Cochrane North is being basically doubled in size, and the other one, Timiskaming, is going to be basically doubled in size.

People in the north right now, and I'm sure they're saying the same thing in rural and southern Ontario, are saying: "Just because they have a majority government, do they have to penalize all of the people to fulfil their political agenda? Isn't there any heart or aren't there any feelings in this government at all?" My argument is that quite clearly, until such time that there is a province-wide strike and the complete province is shut down and people show more anger than what they've shown so far, this government is not going to listen.

We know that in Alberta, Ralph Klein had no choice. He had to blink.

They blinked when the doctors took them on. They offered them a 7.5% increase and now that's been rejected.

Mr Bisson: What about the lawyers?

Mr Len Wood: They blinked when the lawyers took them on, when the lawyers wanted more money. But the ordinary working people and the people I represent in Cochrane North are not being listened to, as most of the people throughout the province of Ontario aren't.

How can you say that you're going to have a good health care system and you're not going to cut one penny out of health care and yet, throughout my riding, we see that there is going to be 100 hospital beds closed? There are going to be nurses laid off. There are going to be lab technicians laid off.

We already see that MTO is contracting out. They've moved the OPP headquarters to Burk's Falls, close to North Bay. Why? Why move a nice modern office out of northern Ontario and into very close to the Premier's own riding? It doesn't make any sense to a lot of the people up in the north.

1710

The northern constituents, the northern families up there depend on the members speaking up in the Legisla-

ture and presenting their concerns, and they know how the Legislature can affect their daily lives, whether it be health care or education. If I look at my mother-in-law, who's 81 years old, never did she expect that she was going to be attacked by Mike Harris and his Conservatives as far as prescription drugs were concerned. She's been receiving that since 1965. Now they're saying: "We need this money. You're going to have to contribute. Even though you're only getting old age pension, you're going to have to contribute your share so that we can give this 30% tax break to the wealthy people in the province of Ontario, the upper-income people." That's what this is all about.

Sure, everybody agrees that somewhere along the line the deficit has to be brought down to zero and the debt has to be paid off and the books have to be balanced, but at the same time there's a promise of \$6 billion per year going back to the wealthiest people in Ontario. To do that, they're cutting deeper. Maybe if they hadn't made that silly campaign promise to give a tax break of 30% to the wealthiest people in this province, to the bank managers and the bank executives and the corporation executives who are making big money, they wouldn't have had to cut 27 politicians. Maybe they would have only had to redistribute to the point where there was going to be fair representation and democracy was going to be respected in Ontario.

But right now, because of all of the silly promises that have been made — and I might point out that my constituents are saying to me, "That's not what they promised during the election campaign," whether it be health care cuts or education cuts or making ridings larger, because at that time we didn't know what the final result of the federal redistribution of the boundaries was going to be. It's making it very difficult for people to represent their areas.

I pointed out before that I personally was working in Spruce Falls, in the paper mill. I was happy there and could have gone back to work in there, but with representation being reduced now and democracy under attack by the present government over the last 16 months, I felt that it's very important that we stick around and fight for what is right for the people of the province, making sure that they get proper representation at Queen's Park and that we are able to represent that area.

I go back to the fact that the two members who represent my particular area and the area of Cochrane South, both Peter Thalheimer and Réginald Bélair, are saying that it's going to be very difficult or almost impossible to represent their area in Ottawa. So you can imagine, with all of the issues provincial members of Parliament have to deal with, how difficult it's going to be.

For example, when you look at our ridings — and I'll talk about the hundreds of miles from North Bay to Longlac and all the way up the Hudson Bay coast and James Bay coast and representing all of the native communities — one of these two ridings is larger than countries like Italy, Spain and Germany. There doesn't seem to be any understanding whatsoever that it's physically impossible to represent these particular areas. It can't be done at the federal level, and democracy will

be eliminated at the provincial level when the provincial member of Parliament is not going to be able to get around.

Sure, people say, "Well, you have a toll-free number going into your riding," but it's not the same as seeing people face to face. I have four different languages in the riding: Ojibway, Cree, French and English. People do want to see the member or at least one of his staff to speak face to face. As far as I'm concerned, the name of the legislation, less politicians, is an insult to rural southern Ontario and also to northern Ontario and the large rural areas. It's going to be very difficult to do this.

I point out that this was not what the people heard during the election campaign. Mike Harris was going through northern Ontario saying, "I'll be the voice for the north." Now we find out that not only education and health care are under attack, but the road systems are under attack.

They've asked for a little bit of pavement between Fauquier and Smooth Rock Falls to pave the shoulders of the road so that when a transport is pushing you from behind and wanting to get by, you can pull over on to the side and let the transports pass if they don't want to follow the speed limit. There are a lot of people who want to follow the speed limit. The word back from MTO is: "We know the NDP promised they were going to do this in 1995 and we were going to do it in 1995. We've put a freeze on all spending in 1996. We only let the contracts go in July." Now we find out that neither the Minister of Northern Development and Mines nor the Minister of Transportation is going to spend the money in 1997 that was committed to that particular road in 1995. So we've seen very little spent in 1995, very little spent in 1996, and now all of the passing lanes are being cancelled in that particular area. Why? We don't know. I believe in safety on the roads, and they're saying, "Why does Mike Harris not believe in safety on the roads?"

If this was the plan over the last 10 or 15 years, to put passing lanes in there, why now all of a sudden, for the sake of saving a few dollars to give back to the wealthiest people in Ontario, would they disregard safety? Why would they continue to cut health care? Why would they continue to cut education and increase the classrooms? Why would they take the transfer payments away from the municipalities in northern Ontario?

Every politician who's ever come from northern Ontario has been able to convince Queen's Park that northern Ontario is different. The winters are longer. There are extreme conditions up there. The water and sewer systems don't last as long; the roads don't last as long. They are different and it costs more money to maintain these communities with less resources.

Now all of a sudden we find out that there is no voice at Queen's Park as far as the Conservative government is concerned. They're saying, "We were elected in 1995. We've got 82 members at Queen's Park and we're not going to listen to anybody else in Ontario," even if there are 200,000 or 300,000 people who are marching and asking Mike to please bring back democracy in Ontario. We had democracy for 100 years. In the last 16 months, where has democracy disappeared to? They're speaking loud and clear, and I'm sure in the next march you'll see

a million or a million and a half people out there in opposition, because people are fed up when democracy is being taken away from them, and that's exactly what the feeling is in this province.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Len Wood: I know that some of the members across the way don't like to hear that we might have a government here that is not listening to the people in Ontario. They're going on their own contrary way and saying, "Sure, during the election campaign we promised there would be a voice for the people of Ontario and there would be a special voice for northern Ontario." But when the results of the election came in, of 15 seats in northern Ontario, eight went to the NDP, six went to the Liberals and — guess what? — one went to Mike Harris: Nipissing. He's got one seat out of 15.

A lot of the people in the area are saying, "Is this retaliation?" I say I don't believe that Mike Harris would retaliate in that manner by eliminating the 15 people who are representing northern Ontario and reducing them, but people are saying that. People are speaking loud and clear and they're very upset with what is happening. There is anger.

1720

To some of the comments that people have said, I've said, "Look, don't make those comments because there might be a policeman around," and this and that, but there is anger and frustration and it's serious as far as I'm concerned. I don't like to hear those comments being made, because we know things do happen, but there is anger and frustration. We saw it demonstrated last Friday and Saturday in Toronto, we've seen it in four other cities right across the province, and it's going to happen in other cities as the Conservative government, as we see, is not listening to us.

With that, I've basically said what I wanted to put on the record. I'm hoping that when the general government committee or whichever committee is going to deal with this piece of legislation travels through northern Ontario, when the presentations are being made and there are suggestions and ideas of how this bill is silly and there should be a reworking of the boundaries — maybe we need less politicians, nobody's arguing that, but the way it is being done is very unfair to the people of northern Ontario, and I might point out, to rural Ontario.

I understand public hearings are going to take place. I hope it's not like Bill 26. I hope that they listen and that they listen to any amendments that might come forward from the third party. My good leader, Howard Hampton, I'm sure is going to be participating in those hearings and making sure that democracy is brought back to Ontario, either now or when he becomes Premier after the next election.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I want to respond briefly, if I might, to the member's statements, and to complete and perhaps correct the record on some of the things the member has put on the record. I'm sure he'll be embarrassed when he understands the facts of the case.

I heard the member talk at great length that here was a government that is doing something different than what

it campaigned on. Very precisely in the Common Sense Revolution it indicated that we would be paralleling the federal boundaries and reducing the number of provincial members. So we are doing exactly what we said we were going to do. Let's be clear about that.

Second, I heard the member talk about A Voice for the North. A Voice for the North didn't refer to more members. We clearly said there'd be fewer elected members, but there'd be fewer need for them actually because what we said was less decision-making by Queen's Park, less decision-making by the bureaucracy at Queen's Park, more decision-making in the hands of the locally elected people, the people who live and work in the north. We are delivering on that commitment, and for that reason we probably need less representation. We need far less of the calibre you're providing, I can tell you that.

You have sat down here and you would merrily go along with 151 members. That's what the election commission said, "Oh, 10 years later, now we'll go from 130 to 151." You are shameless in your pursuit of more politicians and big government and more money in your own pocket and less for the people.

We campaigned on A Voice for the North; we're delivering on A Voice for the North. We campaigned on paralleling the federal boundaries, fewer politicians, and we are delivering exactly on that.

I could not believe that not one of you, not you, not a member of your caucus, not a member of the provincial Liberal caucus, showed up for our northern caucus meeting. The federal Liberal members, God bless them, were there. We worked on a number of initiatives cooperatively together in a non-partisan way. You are an embarrassment to your constituents and the people of northern Ontario.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm pleased to rise and comment at least briefly on the exuberant speech by the member for Cochrane North. I also believe the Premier doth protest too loud.

It seems to me that if the Premier is serious about fewer politicians — his idea of fewer politicians is probably one, but that's beside the point — I think if he's looking for more cost-saving measures, and I think everyone in the province would agree with this, what you should do is also have the provincial election at the same time we have the federal election. That is the American way, and I think the people of Ontario —

Hon Mr Harris: Bring in an amendment; we'll consider it. I am ready to go to the people today. Are you ready?

Mr Michael Brown: I hope you do. Yes, we are. I think that it would be just an absolute saving of money if we could go on exactly the same day as the federal Parliament. But that is a ridiculous suggestion. I think everybody in the House would recognize that I've made that at least a little facetiously.

Interjections.

Mr Michael Brown: Mr Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Michael Brown: But I think it speaks to the fact that democracy in this province, under this government — that made-in-Ontario solutions to Ontario problems is something they just are not interested in.

The Premier should understand as a fellow northerner that having five members represent the constituencies of the rural north is an absurdity. It is an absurdity, and the Premier should go to those hearings across the north and hear personally what those people have to say.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I want to congratulate the member for Cochrane North on getting to the point on a number of these issues. I would say that the member for Nipissing has succeeded yet again in missing the point.

The reality behind this bill is this: What the government is really about is about centralizing more decision-making in Toronto. It's about centralizing more decision-making in Toronto than ever before and it's about removing representation from people. It's about removing the representation that can be used to hold nameless, faceless bureaucrats accountable.

If you look at what the government is doing in terms of removing school board representation, removing municipal representation and centralizing more and more of the decision-making in Toronto, this government is creating more nameless, faceless bureaucrats than ever before. This government pretends that all the decisions can be made by those nameless, faceless bureaucrats in Toronto and that you don't need anyone here to hold those bureaucrats accountable.

The fact of the matter is, this Legislature is not about the government. This Legislature is about giving people representation. This Legislature is about holding arrogant governments accountable and it's about holding nameless, faceless bureaucrats accountable for the decisions they make. What this government is doing is taking away that representation from people in different parts of the province and adding more nameless and faceless bureaucrats than ever before. It is putting those nameless and faceless bureaucrats in a position where it will be harder to hold them accountable. That is what the Conservative government is really doing, and the member for Cochrane North is quite right to point that out.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I just want to speak briefly to this particular piece of legislation, because I think back to a speech which I made in 1986 in this place, prior to the last distribution. I made the suggestion: Wouldn't it be wise for the Legislature to go to the federal boundaries for 94 ridings from about 120 or 115 ridings at that time?

But you know what we did at that time? Instead of going and confining the number of ridings, making the tremendous saving in terms of having the same electoral lists, in terms of having the same riding boundaries — I think one of the greatest advantages in this piece of legislation, quite frankly, is that it will be less confusing in the minds of the public as to which riding they are in.

1730

I want to say that I made that suggestion back in 1986 and I am proud that this government made this a significant part of the last election platform. That was on the advertisements; that was in the Common Sense Revolution. If there is anything we can say, it is that we told everyone in Ontario we were going to do this and we're going to do it, and we're going to do it with good reason.

I represent about 107,000 people at the present time, so the new riding will not be any greater. But I want to tell

the members from the north and from the other parts of the province that although I represent a large number of people, I also represent a riding which is 200 kilometres long and is not easy to cover as well, so their problems with regard to distance are not peculiar to them. They are the same as in eastern Ontario. However, you can represent 100,000 people efficiently if you're willing to work hard, and that's what you've got to do, Mister.

The Acting Speaker: Further comment or questions? Response, please.

Mr Bisson: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. It's his speech.

The Acting Speaker: No, I believe it —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane North.

Mr Len Wood: Thank you. Just to wrap up, I want to thank the member for Carleton, our NDP leader, Howard Hampton, and the member for Algoma, Mr Brown.

When I come back to the member for Nipissing, what are you going to do, Mr Premier, with the \$11 million? Are you going to add further staff to your office so that you and the minister sitting behind you, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, can make all the decisions here in Toronto? There's \$11 million that you say you're going to save, but if you add on an extra 50 or 60 staff so that you can run everything from Queen's Park, it doesn't make any sense.

These are the comments. There's no doubt about it that democracy is being destroyed in this province by the Fewer Politicians Act. I am pleased that the Premier is here to listen to some of the comments. The only comment that I would make when wrapping up is that when the public hearings are taking place throughout this province, I hope you will direct your staff to listen to some of the amendments that are there and not do like the bully Bill 26 and ram everything through and say: "I have the right to dictate in this province whatever I want because I have 82 members of the Conservative caucus. This is what the people in the province of Ontario say they want done. I don't care if I didn't get any representation from northern Ontario; this is what we're going to do." I think it's very unfair if this is the attitude of the Premier in this province. With that, I would just like to wrap up.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am pleased to address three significant areas which I feel are critical in the introduction and debate of Bill 81.

Those three include that in fact Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act, is about a transfer of power from the balance of Ontario to Toronto, and specifically to the Premier's office. The second point is that this absolutely will mean a lesser voice for northern ridings, northern parts of Ontario and rural Ontario. The third is that it's really surprising to see that a government that should be responsible to the people of Ontario and to the future of governments, frankly, in Ontario would dare to call this bill an act regarding fewer politicians, as though that were actually a positive thing, the view of politicians and a government responsibility to change public attitude, because that in fact is the government's job. Those are the three areas that I would like to address.

First, the transfer of power: Members across the way have dared to suggest that they are leading by example in the introduction of this bill and doing what they said they were going to do. That is a farce. In fact, that is the greatest hypocrisy of the members of this House to stand and suggest that you're doing what you said you were going to do.

Interjections.

Mrs Papatello: Speaker, I'd like to speak of what may be perceived by the public as hypocrisy. Is that acceptable?

The Deputy Speaker: Let's not play games. Withdraw it and that's it.

Mrs Papatello: It's a deal, Mr Speaker.

There have been several examples of the government to date, and I always liken it to the Star Wars movies, and any young people out there in who follow the various Star — Star Trekkie over there — Wars movies, there was always that one character that they called Jabba the Hutt, that great big blob with that centre mouth — the young pages know what I'm talking about — that big mouth that just draws everything into its vortex and just keeps pulling everything from outside in. That in fact is the best image of the Harris government, because that is what they've done on innumerable occasions, so they have passed legislation so far that does exactly that.

Let me give you other examples of ministers and their policies to date, like the family support plan: closing eight regional offices across Ontario; of course, one in Windsor as well closed, one of our regional offices. And what has the Attorney General done about that? He hired more people into Toronto and in the Toronto offices. He fires the experienced people in Windsor and he hires clerks in Toronto, just drawing more of that power into the Toronto offices and away from the balance of Ontario where it would be closer to the people of Ontario.

The Premier responded to comments from the member speaking earlier from the NDP caucus and he dared to say that there would be less of a need for representation. He also dared to say that you would actually have more of a local voice. That in fact is not the case. Bill 26 greatly took away from the voice of local people.

I remember speaking to councillors in townships in Essex county regarding Bill 26 when it was being introduced and we told them then: "If the government is talking about amalgamation, you will not have a voice, you will not have a choice. If you do not want to amalgamate, you will not have an area for appeal." Don't shake your head on the other side. That is absolutely the case. Now the politicians are recognizing that they're being forced to amalgamate and there is no right of appeal for communities that do not want to be amalgamated. My town of LaSalle is one of those. They by themselves in the county of Essex would not make up the majority and if the majority should vote in favour of amalgamation, LaSalle, like it or not, will be drawn into an amalgamation process with no right of appeal. That is what this Premier speaks about. When he talks about more of a local voice, that is a joke.

Let me carry on. I'd like to specifically mention the Premier's office. We talk about leading by example. The member from Niagara speaks about how we're doing what we said we were going to do, we're leading by

example. Let me show you what leading by example has meant so far. These are numbers from the Office of the Premier on estimates. The 1995-96 estimates out of the Premier's office list those expenses at \$1.88 million. Let me tell you about the estimates for the 1996-97 budget. The Office of the Premier has increased its budget to \$2.716 million. That, member from Niagara, is the kind of leading by example that your government is doing, not doing what you said you were going to do, but in fact increasing the staff.

I met a new driver today for the Premier. You have a new driver. This is the kind of job creation that the Harris government is about. I encourage all Ontarians who are out there looking for work today, send your résumé to the Premier's office because he's doing the hiring in Ontario. If you look at the kind of increase in the budget of the Office of the Premier, you've increased close to \$800,000, and telling the rest of Ontario that you're going to cut back and lead by example is farcical. I hope that that word is acceptable.

Let me tell you too —

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Can you spell it?

Mrs Pupatello: Absolutely. In fact, the reality is that you're cutting the number of MPPs and cutting the effectiveness of having representation across Ontario, only to base your centre of power in the Premier's office.

I had an opportunity to debate the minister, Dave Johnson, on this in London a couple of weeks ago and we had another of the Tory members — Bruce Smith was there from the London area. We had a very good debate on this Bill 81. What was most striking was that Dave Johnson said at that time, "We are moving closer to one man, one voice."

Let me tell you, Ontario, nay Canada, has never been close to one man, one voice in how they choose representation, because governments have always recognized how significant a need there is for regional differences and regional representations, which is why the territories get the kind of representation they do and PEI as a province, so to liken the kind of numbers we have in Ontario with the federal numbers simply doesn't make sense. The base they use is that the dividing number is different from the number you would use in Ontario. In fact, the federal members will be increasing their number from 99 to 103, because they recognize the need for more.

1740

I'd like to respond to the comments of our dear Minister of Agriculture, Noble Villeneuve, because he makes the point far better and more eloquently than I ever could. Minister Villeneuve said in 1985, "We do not want to see the rural part of Ontario further under-represented." I think that's a flip-flop. The Minister of Agriculture said that in 1985. He goes on and he says, "I certainly agree with them. Rural Ontario must have more, not less, representation." Mr Minister, how could you change your mind? My, how times have changed.

Let me carry on, and I hope the people of Ontario will take me seriously. I would like nothing better than to see a litany of résumés faxed over to that Premier's office, because that's where the job creation is, that's where the power base is moving to and the Premier's office is hiring — not to say that driver wouldn't be any good, by the way. He's a good Windsor guy who got that job as

yet another driver for the Premier. Nevertheless, that's where the hiring is going on in Ontario.

Interjection: You've got Tories in Windsor?

Mrs Pupatello: Hard to believe that we've got a couple of Tories in Ontario.

Let me carry on. Let's talk about this debate I had the opportunity to have with the member Bruce Smith and the minister, the Management Board Chair, Dave Johnson. He said that members don't have to worry about the kind of representation they're going to have with fewer MPPs, and he said that was because MPPs in his government have easy access to ministers. They have a voice, they have a strong voice in their government and they have a strong link to their cabinet members and they get to influence those decisions. I have only one word to say about that. Ha. That is simply not the case.

I'd like to give you some more examples of that. Let's look at the cuts in agriculture. The Premier himself said, "No cuts to agriculture, not a single nickel." The Minister of Agriculture didn't live up to those promises, certainly not doing what you said you were going to do. Let's look at what you did do to agriculture: Every farmer in Ontario should take note that you in fact have cut \$83 million from agriculture since the moment you took office. That, Minister, is a flip-flop.

Let me carry on. Eight regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture have been closed, and you are moving to close even more. You're moving to new user fees. The deputy minister has made it clear that he's following Management Board guidelines for cost recovery. What will that mean to farmers across Ontario? It will include cost recovery for pamphlets, research papers, consultations, inspections and many other services which were previously free. You are nickel and diming them to death is what you're doing, certainly not what the Premier used to say — not a nickel cut from agriculture. That was a joke as well.

Let me carry on. I'd like to know, if we have further or less representation in rural areas, what will the member for Chatham-Kent do? Is he going to support this bill? He's already seen what kind of influence he could possibly have had on his Minister of Agriculture. Has he been in support of the kind of changes the ministry has made in agriculture? How about our good friend from Lambton? Will he be voting in support of the bill? Surely he didn't have access to the minister. Surely he didn't tell the minister to cut \$83 million from agriculture when they said they weren't going to touch agriculture. Clearly they don't have the kind of access they profess to have.

We all read about Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound. He didn't know they were even closing a jail in his riding, and this member, Bruce Smith, tells me easy access to the minister, "We talk to them all the time." They closed the jail and he didn't know it. And the other day our member for Brampton South, Tony Clement, didn't realize they had let go people at the Attorney General, the courts, in his own riding of Brampton South. He was surprised. What kind of access has he had to the ministry? Big surprise to him as well. What does that mean? The members of the House currently do not have access to the ministers, do not have access to the Premier's office, do not have any influence whatsoever on the kinds of decisions that are being made,

because if they are truly representing their ridings, surely they would never be in support of that, and in fact they couldn't be.

Let me carry on. The North Bay council passed a resolution against VLTs and against the VLT bill. They passed a resolution in the town of North Bay. That is the Premier's own riding. We have to be concerned that even as the representation stands today, the people of Ontario are not getting representation that is good and of high quality. Here the Premier sits at Queen's Park making decisions that his own towns in the north couldn't possibly support. Our good member for Kenora, Frank Miclash, already gave evidence of mayors who have asked him specifically not to go forward with this bill, but the mayor from Sioux Lookout sees that he cannot access information or influence the Premier's office.

Of course in this case, with this bill, the biggest hits will be in the north; there's no question about that. Why would people in the south or the east or central Ontario be all that concerned? Those of us who sit in the House with our colleagues from the north begin to understand the significant differences of living in the north and what kind of relationship clearly exists between those two, that the north does feed the balance of Ontario and that there are significant relationships there.

Let me tell you about some of those changes and differences of living in the north: Winter control costs are 23% higher in the north than in other parts of Ontario. Storm sewer costs are 46% higher. Those are the kinds of climate changes that mean higher costs for those who live in the north. Health services cost 57% more in the north. Of what relevance is this to Bill 81? Let me tell you that the representatives from the north must have clear and greater access and representation to the Minister of Health, because just as that bulldozer went roaring through Sudbury, closing hospitals, closing beds, with no regional beds set aside for the northern areas that feed into Sudbury, where are those members going to go and be represented when you're clearly cutting their numbers? Just as those of us in the south are learning how important the north is to the balance of Ontario, this government, led by a Premier who is from the north, is cutting the representation of the north.

I find it strange that they could even discuss this today when Ernie Eves himself is quoted as saying, "It goes without saying that this travel time alone would render effective representation by one MPP very difficult, if not virtually impossible." This man is the Minister of Finance. Where has he been in the interim? This wasn't all that long ago, and I'll tell you, the north hasn't changed all that dramatically since 1985. But he's certainly changed his position now. There's only one reason that's happening, and that is a transfer of power from the outer regions of Ontario to the centre, that great vortex right here at Queen's Park, so that you'll have more staff in the Premier's office, a larger executive branch of the people who actually are running the show, because the members in this House do not have influence, do not have access, cannot help the government make good decisions for the ridings they represent.

Let's talk about more health cuts. I would particularly like to have the ear of the health minister on these kinds of points. When we attended estimates on health specifi-

cally, what was most intriguing to me were the Tory MPPs who participated at the estimates committee. This was relevant because clearly it shows that the members of the government of the day themselves cannot access or influence decisions that are affecting their ridings.

Why would Wayne Wettlaufer, the member for Kitchener, come to that committee to talk about St Mary's? Why would he be public in his own area about having to save St Mary's General Hospital? He's a member of the government. He should be able to get that kind of information to a minister who would listen. In fact, the case may be that the minister himself cannot influence the decisions about what is happening in health care cuts. They said they wouldn't cut health care; they have cut health care, and they continue to cut health care because there are more cuts on the way.

1750

In my community alone day after day there are more nurses out on the street with the argument put forward by this government that they'll simply change jobs, that they'll go work in some private firm at lesser pay. Who knows when? Because to do that the minister is on the hook to reinvest that health care money back in our community and you haven't —

Hon Mr Wilson: Jean Chrétien's the only one. Why don't you say it? Jean Chrétien. Once and for all tell you constituents what's going on.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Health, order, please. The Minister of Health, there is a period that we call questions and comments, if you want to be patient and wait for that.

Mrs Pupatello: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm glad to see there is some kind of lively debate over this issue after all, because the reality is that when you see policy changes that negatively affect our ridings at home, we want to have a say. The people who should be the decision-makers are the MPPs themselves who were duly elected to be here, not the Premier's office, not the executive branch, not more staff people who spin the story of the day. The people who are getting jobs in Ontario are more drivers for the Premier, more people writing press releases, more communications folks, more people developing this machiavellian strategy of government, not the members themselves. In fact, we've got example after example of Tory MPPs who were ineffective in making that kind of an influence on government.

Let's look at the paper today. We spoke about this earlier. "O'Toole hints he's already had enough." What has he found in the riding of Durham East? He's found that the people of Durham East are not in keeping with his thinking. He's not enjoying this very much. He thought he was going to have a great time in government, I'm sure, being a member of the government party, being able to influence and make decisions, participate in policy-making. Ha. He hasn't got anything to do with that. The reality is he's not very happy.

He told the press in the weekend Port Perry Star. "The MPP said that virtually all the feedback coming into his Bowmanville constituency office is negative." He also said he gets "little encouragement from the people of Durham East." Did it ever occur to the member for Durham East that maybe he ought to change his tune, that maybe he should truly be coming into Queen's Park and

representing the voice of the people who sent him here in the first place?

He goes on to say, "I don't know why anyone would want this job." I've got a really quick answer for the Premier. I don't know why anybody would want this job: A great way to get rid of some of the politicians you'd like to get rid of is maybe get rid of some of the ones who don't want to be here any more, and most of those are in your caucus, Mr Premier.

The final point I'd like to make concerns the very title of the bill: Fewer Politicians Act. As a new member of the House, I take great personal offence at this kind of bill and its title. To have a government — ministers, the Premier — dare to suggest that fewer politicians is a good thing, you are implying that those you currently have are no good.

I will put my record against the Premier's and in any other kind of occupation. It's about time that people themselves who are politicians dare to stand up and say they do work for a living, that they take pride in the work they do and they effect good representation for the ridings that sent them here. But that is not what the Premier is doing and not what the Chair of Management Board is doing either. To stand up and suggest that you're going to buy into the populist theme that politicians are no good is totally irresponsible and it behooves the minister to come forward with better legislation than that. It is totally unacceptable.

When we look at the pages who are here in the House today, young people who are active in all our riding associations across Ontario, how could you ever convince young people to go into the business of politics when you get these kinds of people, the government itself, saying that politicians are no good?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, the Minister of Agriculture.

Mrs Papatello: I don't accept that and everywhere I go I will encourage young people to take part in this kind of career, because the job we're doing is important and I will not buy into the theory that this Premier wants to put forward, that fewer would be better, because the ones who are here who truly want to be here are doing a good job, and the rest is simply unacceptable, buying into populist themes is simply unacceptable. It doesn't behove the Premier at all to behave in this way.

I must say, finally, that if we look at the kinds of comments that were made by now ministers, like our good Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, how you can sit here in the House today and be part of a bill that cuts agriculture, that cuts representation to rural areas when the minister himself is on record as saying that less representation is the worst thing that could happen to rural areas, is simply unforgivable. I hope the people of your riding who sent you here remember how you vote on the bill. I say that to the rest of the Conservative members: The people who sent you here expect good representation; that's exactly what you owe them and no less.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bisson: I get a bare two minutes to comment on a bill that is virtually going to change not only the political landscape but the relationship northerners have in regard

to Queen's Park and how they interrelate as northerners with Queen's Park. Because the government wants to push this bill forward, not every member of the Legislature has an opportunity to respond.

But I want to say this: The member for Nipissing, the Premier, whom the member alluded to in her speech, has said he's doing this because he believes the best way to give representation to northern Ontario is to get rid of the politicians. I say to the Premier, why not privatize the whole thing? It seems to me that what the Premier is trying to say is that we don't need politicians, we don't need elected representatives to come to Queen's Park and represent the views of the people of the constituencies. Where do you stop? The whole purpose of a Legislature and the whole purpose of an elected member is to make sure that in the end you're able to (a) keep the government accountable —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Keep growing, yes; more and more.

Mr Bisson: Listen to the member across the way. I think the comments and the heckling on the part of the members — Mr Speaker, it's pretty darned clear that the members of the government here have no concept of what government is about and what elected representation is all about. They sit here, have no sense of what happens in regard to —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: As a percentage we are gaining.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We are about to end.

Mr Bisson: Forget it. They're not going to listen. This government is prepared not to listen on this particular issue. I ain't going to waste my breath talking to a Premier and a government that don't give a damn about the people of this province and don't give a damn about the people of northern Ontario. You're a darned disgrace to the people of the north and you should be ashamed as a person out of Nipissing. What a joke.

Hon Mr Harris: I want to say that I listened to most of the remarks from the member for Windsor-Sandwich and I really am shocked at a couple of things.

Mr Bisson: Why don't you go and make disparaging comments? You're very good at that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, order, please.

Hon Mr Harris: I do not know why the member for Windsor-Sandwich is so violently opposed to the boundaries the federal Liberal Party brought in and implemented and wants us to run on in the next election.

The Liberal Party of Canada — in fact all federal parties — has decided — and I don't think they gerrymandered; I don't believe so. They have set 103 ridings for the province of Ontario. They have made a decision that they can work hard enough as members to represent their constituents. For some reason or other the member for Windsor-Sandwich, totally opposed to Jean Chrétien and the Liberal Party of Canada, seems to think they're wrong, that they made a huge mistake; seems to think that she can't work as hard as the federal members can. I've heard this from other members, that for some reason or other they don't think they're as good as federal members of Parliament.

Mr Bisson: Oh, Mike, you're such a joke. What an asshole. You're smug. Why don't you sit down?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Cochrane South, your conduct in this House is not acceptable. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know whether it's some kind of inferiority complex, but I want to tell you that I believe that we as provincial legislators can do as much work as federal members of Parliament. I ask the member to go to her constituents and explain why it takes a board of directors of 130, as opposed to a board of directors of 103, to run the affairs of this province.

1800

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to congratulate my colleague from Windsor-Sandwich for her lively and spirited speech in respect of Bill 81.

I'm pleased to have the intervention of the member for Nipissing because there are a couple of things that the member's speech, I think, touched on that I'd like to simply reiterate in the presence of the first minister.

Never before in the history of Ontario has this sovereign Legislature surrendered to the Dominion Parliament the right of this Legislature to determine the representation in this place.

Hon Mr Wilson: That's a stretch.

Mr Conway: Well, it's no stretch at all. In fact, Ontario has by this policy decided, for whatever good reason or for whatever reason, to give —

Hon Mr Wilson: You were not listening. It's a constitutional amendment.

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, will you please restrain the Minister of Health, who may need the hospital services if he doesn't slow down.?

My point is that the Ontario government with this initiative is surrendering to the Dominion Parliament and the federal government the right for Ottawa to establish the representation in this the largest of the Canadian provinces.

Second, on the efficiency argument I might ask the first minister, the member for Nipissing, who, like the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture, had very different views when the last representation bill was before this assembly 10 years ago, but since efficiency seems to be the principal concern and less government activity and less spending on representation, my question to the member for Nipissing is this: Having accepted the federal boundaries and the Dominion Parliament's right to establish the representation in this assembly, are you prepared to let Elections Canada run our elections? Are you prepared to abolish the \$3 million or \$4 million a year we spend on the Ontario elections office and let federal returning officers, for example, run our elections?

Mr Wildman: I'd like to congratulate the member for Windsor-Sandwich on her presentation. I see that there are a number of members who have come into the House because we're going to have a vote and a division on this. I really do not understand how it is there can be members on the treasury bench, particularly the Premier, who are taking such a different position with regard to the protection of rural and northern representation in this particular case now in 1996 as compared to the positions they took in 1992 and 1986.

I recall that the member for Nipissing in 1992 made a speech in this House, standing in about the same place I am now, in which he said that besides population, the community of interest — that was the term he used — in west Nipissing should be taken into account and that it would not be a good idea simply on the basis of population to move the francophone community from west Nipissing out of that riding. He said that besides population, community of interest should be taken into account. It's interesting now that he has decided to abdicate the protection of that community of interest to his federal colleagues, and they have not properly protected it.

For that matter, the member for S-D-G & East Grenville in 1986 and then in 1992 — in 1992 he brought forward a resolution in which he said not only should we maintain the representation of rural Ontario, we should increase the number of representatives from rural Ontario. We should increase it. How on earth can the member who now has the opportunity to do something for rural Ontario change the position he took then? Why is it he is abandoning rural Ontario? Is he going to stand up for rural Ontario? Is the Premier from northern Ontario going to stand up for the people of the north and vote against this legislation? To assume that the federal Liberals have done the right thing —

The Deputy Speaker: Time has expired. The member for Windsor-Sandwich, you have two minutes.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm so pleased that my comments today would elicit this kind of lively debate. I appreciate the member for Cochrane South, the Premier himself, the member for Renfrew North and the member for Algoma for their kind comments. In particular, I must say that of all of the things that I said today regarding Bill 81 and fewer politicians, the Premier had two minutes to respond. Did he defend cuts to agriculture? No. Did he defend cuts to health? Absolutely not. Did he defend rural representation? No. Of all the things he could choose to talk about today, based on my half-hour discussion, he couldn't defend any of the cuts, because they are true. The people of Ontario will see that. Let's give them a little bit of time.

Let's also talk about local voice. The Premier had two minutes to respond and he said, "We're going to offer more voice at a local level for the people of Ontario." Why is the government getting rid of two thirds of the local voice in Ontario? That, I'll tell you, is absolute hypocrisy and unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

Cuts to health, cuts to agriculture, cuts to representation from rural areas. I will be watching where the member for Lambton votes, where the member for Chatham-Kent votes. We'll be watching where Wayne Wettlaufer votes when he talks about having a voice for St Mary's hospital in Kitchener, because that is the reality in Ontario today. This bill should not go forward, because it's offensive.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Johnson has moved second reading of Bill 81. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1807 to 1812.

The Deputy Speaker: Please take your seats. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Preston, Peter
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Harnick, Charles	Runciman, Robert W.
Boushy, Dave	Harris, Michael D.	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Hastings, John	Saunderson, William
Carr, Gary	Hodgson, Chris	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Hudak, Tim	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Clement, Tony	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Ron	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Fisher, Barbara	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Wilson, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fox, Gary	Palladini, Al	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence H.
Galt, Doug	Pettit, Trevor	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	McLash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Grandmaître, Bernard	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Hampton, Howard	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68, the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): By unanimous consent, the bill should be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1817.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Lt Col The Hon / L'hon Henry N.R. Jackman CM, KStJ, BA, LLB, LLD
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries
Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Corrwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Jeudi 31 octobre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 31 October 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 31 octobre 1996

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

Mr Kormos moved private member's notice of motion number 32:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should abandon its mandatory workfare program, including mandatory community placements, and introduce locally managed welfare-to-work programs that:

- (a) are voluntary;
- (b) respect the dignity and human rights of the individual;
- (c) provide the kind of training and support that help people get marketable skills for real jobs;
- (d) pay fair wages for the work experience and training;
- (e) do not displace other workers from their jobs; and
- (f) allow welfare recipients to do volunteer work with community agencies on the same terms and conditions as any other member of the community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Speaker, I've got to tell you, and I've told you this before, down where I come from in Welland-Thorold, the concept of workfare is not new. In fact, I remember campaigning in the last provincial election and talking with some of the older folks, those from Crowland and elsewhere in the community, who recalled the 1930s, who recalled themselves or their families, in some cases their fathers, their neighbours, being what were called "relief workers." You see, the government of that day didn't take too kindly to the fact that people were unemployed and that their children were hungry either. Rather than providing them with real jobs or doing the things that were necessary to create real jobs in this province, the government of that day imposed workfare. So we had the relief workers in Crowland digging sewers by hand.

When they had, by God, the audacity to organize themselves, these people from eastern Europe and other parts of the world, some of them speaking broken English, and say, "We as workers in these trenches, with our spades and shovels and pickaxes in our hands, we have the right to organize ourselves and we have the right to demand some very fundamental rights, rights that will permit us to do work in dignity and permit us to work in such a way that we can feed our children and take care

of our families," I'll tell you what the government of the day did. Mitch Hepburn sent down his troops. These people dug those ditches in Crowland at gunpoint. Hepburn's Hussars visited Crowland. So these people know the indignity and the evil and the violence that can be wreaked upon hardworking people, people who want jobs, people who want to support themselves and their families, by governments that are intolerant of the poor and of people for whom the economy is unable to provide work.

I've received some calls that this is a relatively modest request of the government. Quite frankly, at the end of the day, the real issue is the fact that there aren't jobs in this province for a whole lot of hardworking people who want to be employed. This government made promises. We know what the promises were. This government promised, in the course of its election campaign, 725,000 jobs. I won't dispute the fact that more Tories were elected to Queen's Park than were Liberals or New Democrats. Clearly a whole lot of Ontarians took them at their word. But what do we have a year and a couple of months later? We've got higher unemployment now in the province of Ontario than existed in June 1995. We haven't seen but one of those promised jobs and we've seen yet more working women and men forced on to the dole.

I know the mythology; all of us do. Quite frankly, people simply don't believe Ms Ecker any more, Mr Harris. I know the mythology that was generated by the Tories during the last election. It crept its way in the most mean-spirited of ways through every community in this province. But I tell you, Speaker, that unlike, I suspect, most of the Tory members, I've spoken to those people and I know those people who have been forced on to the welfare rolls. I've been in their homes, know their families. I tell you that, contrary to the mythology that this government, that Harris and the Tories, would try to perpetuate, people want to work. People want to have jobs. People on welfare assistance don't want to be on welfare assistance. People on welfare assistance want real training so they can entertain the prospect of assuming real work.

We need in this province work and jobs, not workfare and the indignity of being forced into programs that are deadend, because that's what workfare is all about. There's nothing meaningful about the job training component. There's nothing meaningful about it at all; it's about punishing the unemployed for the crisis that this government maintains in this province of joblessness.

1010

We know, and quite frankly this government knows, that social assistance recipients are already doing everything they possibly can to get off welfare and into real

employment. We know that welfare-to-work programs are irrelevant. Welfare-to-work programs of any ilk are irrelevant when there are no jobs for those people to go to after the program is completed. This government, I'm convinced, quite purposefully misses the mark. It's reneged, it's breached its promise to create jobs: 725,000 — not one. There is higher unemployment now in the province of Ontario than there was in June 1995 when Harris and his gang were elected.

Quite frankly, this province is having a hard time putting the whole system together. It's unable to find hosts or partners, if you will, for this insidious proposal. Communities and agencies recognize how shallow and how meaningless Mike Harris's Tory workfare program really is.

This government is speedy and fast to criticize, for instance, Jobs Ontario. Were there faults that had to be corrected? Of course there were, but in itself as a new program it took people off the welfare rolls and provided them real training under conditions that promoted dignity and pride and got them into real jobs. Workfare doesn't come close.

The proposal before the Legislature today is, as I say, a modest one. Surely participation in any welfare-to-work program should be voluntary: voluntary certainly on the part of any partner or host that's involved in the training and voluntary on the part of the participant. Otherwise, it becomes oh, so meaningless.

It's imperative as well that this government not simply be creating pools of scabs or free labour for the private sector. I submit to you that no participant in a welfare-to-work program should perform duties that are performed by a paid employee or that have been performed by paid employees of a municipality or region, or even in the private sector, and that no placement should ever be permitted in work sites that are involved in labour disputes. This government has already done enough damage to the workplace in Ontario with its revocation of Bill 40, and for it to use its workfare proposal to provide scabs for employers who are unwilling to negotiate collective bargaining agreements is unconscionable.

There has to be a guarantee that participants in these programs are paid a fair wage for their training and their work experience. It's imperative to any successful transition. It's equally imperative that child care be guaranteed, be compulsory for each and every woman — or male single parent, for that matter — to enable them to participate in these sorts of programs. It's imperative as well that any program that it's embarked on be monitored effectively and thoroughly so that the effectiveness of that program can be evaluated.

In terms of the participation, as volunteers, in community agencies, and the community agencies have told me this as well, they understand volunteerism. Volunteerism is an important part of all of our communities, but participants have to be allowed to engage in volunteer work with community agencies on the same terms and conditions as any other members of society. These are bottom-line issues. These are real issues, and these are issues that are called for in this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired.

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to Mr Kormos's resolution

today. I want to say that on the surface, when you look at the "whereases" he's got in the resolution, there's not a great deal of difference between our viewpoints.

If we look, for example, at the beginning, it says, "Whereas all Ontarians are concerned about the number of people on welfare...." Of course, on this side of the House we're very concerned about the number of people on welfare, and I can tell you as well that we believe most Ontarians are.

Then it goes on to say, "Whereas people on welfare want to work...." We know and believe firmly that the people on social assistance in the province of Ontario don't want to be there.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I agree.

Mr Ron Johnson: I see the member for Nepean agreeing with my comments. On the government side, we firmly believe that the people on social assistance want opportunity and they want to get into the workforce.

He then says, "Whereas job creation, employment training and programs building job skills are critical to helping people become more independent and self-supporting...." Again, there is no disagreement on this side of the House. But I'm afraid that's where we part company.

We look then at what Mr Kormos goes on to say, and he talks about making it voluntary, he talks about scrapping our workfare plan. It's evident that we can identify with the problem; that's not the issue here. But what we have to determine, of course, is the solution. No matter how you cut it, the New Democrats don't have a solution, they've never had a solution, and we do.

I think you have to look as well at the fact that if the New Democrats had their way, and I know Mr Kormos mentioned it in his opening remarks, they would bring in what they called at that time Jobs Ontario Training. We know the kind of farce that Jobs Ontario was, don't we, the member for Welland-Thorold? We know the wasted thousands of dollars that were flushed down the drain through the Jobs Ontario Training program. In fact, the Provincial Auditor was very clear in his criticism of that particular program. So that's not what we're about, and we're certainly not going to do that again.

What we really want to do is develop a plan that is going to give people on social assistance opportunity and self-esteem. We believe that our workfare plan has been one small part of welfare reform. Our workfare plan is going to do just that.

I think it's important to note that when people got on to the social assistance plan in the past they've really been trapped in this cycle of dependency, and of course that has created a real generational problem, if you will, with respect to some families in the province. Workfare is going to address that very concern.

I think we have to look at the fact that it's working. If you look at our welfare reforms to date, we're seeing very clearly that our plan is working. There are 180,000 fewer people today on social assistance than were on social assistance when we took office a year and a half ago. I think, quite frankly, that's a number that we can be very proud of, and I think it's a number the New Democrats and the Liberals alike have a very difficult time refuting.

I find it somewhat ironic that we're listening to the member for Welland-Thorold, who belonged to a government that put more women and more children on social assistance than any government in the history of this province. I think it's somewhat ironic that he would bring this motion forward when, when he was in office, they struggled immensely with the social assistance plan and with the number of people going on to social assistance.

I think we have to look at what we are doing as a government, what we are doing to address the problems that, in large part, we inherited from the New Democrats and the Liberals before them.

Mr Kormos: How come unemployment has gone up since you were elected, counsellor?

Mr Ron Johnson: He'll blame the recession; I hear him heckling over there. I hear the member for Welland-Thorold talking about a recession from 1990 to 1995 that caused thousands of people to fall back on the social assistance plan. There's absolutely no doubt that there was a recession. I think we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge that.

1020

Let's look at how they dealt with that recession and let's look at the policies that government put in place to deal with the recession. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind, and I would argue the minds of most Ontarians, that the policies Mr Kormos and his government put in place simply accelerated the recession here in Ontario, that the policies he put in place didn't help one bit but in fact amplified the problem. Whereas Ontario had always been the engine that drove the economy in Canada, in this case, under the New Democrats, it was the last province to recover from the recession, and that was simply because of the policies his government put in place.

As a result, as I said before, that gentleman and his party put more people on social assistance than any government in the history of this country. Let's understand the facts, and the facts are very, very clear.

The member also talks about how somehow we have driven a wedge between those who are affluent — his party says it all the time: the haves and the have-nots. Well, that wedge was already there and that wedge had been there because of the policies his government put in place. The very reason we're going through the economic reform that we're going through now is to eliminate those barriers, to eliminate that wedge so that all Ontarians can have the dignity of a job and so that all Ontarians can have the dignity of working for a living and not have to fall back on the social assistance plan.

He also referred to job creation and he talked about the number of people on social assistance today. I can tell you that 180,000 fewer is a very significant number.

I look at my riding of Brantford. I've got to tell the member for Welland-Thorold that in Brantford they have embraced the workfare plan. I was fortunate in my riding to have the minister down at that time, the Honourable Dave Tsubouchi. He came down to Brantford and toured what we call there St Leonards Pallet Co. I'll tell you, my community in Brantford embraced workfare. In fact, we are one of the 20 communities across the province that are now part of the workfare plan. I can tell you, it's

greeted with tremendous enthusiasm. It's something the people of Brantford are behind 100% and it's certainly something that I know the bureaucrats and the hard-working people with the ministry are supporting 100% in my community.

And it's working too. If you look at our reforms, in Brantford alone — these numbers are staggering. He won't talk about the successes, but let's talk about the success in Brantford. In Brantford alone, we are one third the way there of completely eliminating people on social assistance. One third of the people in my community who were on social assistance before are no longer on social assistance. That is success.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, your voice carries so much. I would ask you just to tone it down a bit.

Mr Ron Johnson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. They get all excited when you start throwing facts at them, because of course they have absolutely no argument when they're confronted with the facts.

Let me just say in conclusion, because I know my colleague from Dufferin-Peel would like to continue, that I believe, as do the people of my community, that workfare is a good plan. It's a plan that's going to create some self-esteem within the workforce and within people on social assistance.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, I won't have to repeat it too often.

Mr Ron Johnson: It's a crying shame when they're confronted with facts and they start jumping around in their seats because they can't combat the facts.

I want to say in conclusion that the member for Welland-Thorold has no idea about job creation. He doesn't understand job training. He doesn't understand job skills. He doesn't understand job markets. The bottom line is that he has no idea about jobs.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise in support of the resolution of the member for Welland-Thorold. I don't think any of us in this House disagree with the concept of meaningful job training, meaningful programs that help people get off welfare, meaningful programs that will help break the cycle, that will help people get on with their lives and get off this miserable existence known as welfare in this province.

Unlike my friends across the floor, I don't believe that people choose to be on welfare. I don't believe that people choose the luxurious lifestyle of living on \$500 a month, I'm sure living the life of the rich and famous on that wonderful, large income that is given to these individuals.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: My friends across the floor "ah" and "ah," on and on.

What this program is all about is a chest-pounding, feel-good, bumper-sticker solution to the real problem in Ontario. There are many people on welfare who voted for the Tories, and they voted for the Tories because they believed that workfare was going to mean a job for them. They didn't believe that what the Tories were talking about was, as the minister said, fix the fireplace at

firemen's park. They didn't believe workfare was painting swings or building baseball diamonds. They didn't believe that this was the meaningful retraining and upgrading programs that this government was talking about.

But you know what? Workfare sells, politically. This government knows that. This government knows that the get-tough, chest-pounding approach works. Frankly, that is the only reason this program was implemented. When this government outlined workfare in their Comic Book Revolution, they did not have a clue how the program would work. A year and a half later, they don't have a clue how this program works. They talk about 20 communities. Most of those communities have not started the programs because the agencies are smarter and have more principle and integrity than the program; the agencies refuse to become involved.

In my own community of Hamilton-Wentworth, they're having a hell of a tough time trying to find agencies that want to participate in workfare because their own integrity and their own mission in helping the poor drives them to refuse to participate in a program that exploits the poor in this province.

I don't buy the concept that the laid-off steelworker in my riding or the laid-off labourer who's been forced on to welfare needs to be forced into picking up rocks in a park or painting swings to make this government feel good. The laid-off steelworker or the laid-off labourer in my riding needs a job, needs the opportunity for a real job, not feel-good, chest-thumping, 17-hours-a-week volunteer work to continue to feed the egos and the public opinion polls of this government.

It is an expensive program. It is part of the ongoing division in this province that my colleague referred to earlier. This government loves to divide and exploit people. And we're not just seeing rich and poor any more. We're seeing those on welfare and those who are not on welfare; those who have jobs and those who don't have jobs; those who need health care and those who don't think they can afford it and get by otherwise; those who have children in day care and those who don't; those who have children in school and those who don't. This is the ongoing politics of division, the nasty and mean politics of division, the politics that believe you can add by subtracting: "You know what? If we lose a few hundred thousand votes among those welfare recipients, think how many votes we gain on the other side." That is the ultimate nastiness of the politics we're seeing over workfare. It is the politics of Michigan, it is the politics of Mississippi, it is the politics in New Jersey. It should not be the politics of Ontario.

This government likes to talk about the impact of their policies and how well they've worked. If they believe that forcing 400,000 children in Ontario to have less to eat, to force 400,000 children to go without shoes or jackets is successful, that is not the Ontario I believe in. When they came to office and their first move was to decide they were going to cut welfare benefits by 22%, they failed to realize that 400,000 kids in this province rely on welfare assistance.

Why are they being victimized by this government? Why do you feel you need to punish 400,000 kids who

rely on that welfare assistance to get by? How do we win? How does this province become a better province by that? It is an ideological attack on the poor and the needy in Ontario.

This is not new. This has been tried and has failed miserably in every jurisdiction across North America. My friends like to say, "Well, it has worked in Michigan, it has worked in New Jersey. The Republican governors, Newt Gingrich's friends, have made this thing work." What they fail to realize is that the reason welfare numbers have dropped in Michigan or have dropped in New Jersey is because unemployment in those states ranges in the 4% to 5% range, not in the 9% to 10% range as in Ontario. There's a clear correlation between unemployment drop and welfare drop in those jurisdictions. There's no clear correlation, in any jurisdiction across North America, between workfare programs and welfare numbers dropping.

1030

What workfare does is take away human dignity. It takes away freedom of choice from people. People should be able to choose the types of meaningful programs they want to get into. There are many programs that work and have worked across this province. In my community of Hamilton-Wentworth, we have programs like Helping Hands, that took hard-to-employ individuals, often who had disabilities, often who had difficulties, drug and alcohol addiction, and put them through some very extensive, meaningful retraining programs that included classroom education, that included literacy upgrading, that included work in the community, and they had a 60% or 70% to 80% success rate. That is a tremendous achievement.

What this government should be doing is helping communities enhance those programs that work, allow the case workers, allow the administrators, allow the welfare recipients to choose the programs that best suit their needs and to let them get on with their lives, not to continue to attack and beat up on and exploit these individuals.

The message you're sending out is that welfare recipients are lazy, that welfare recipients don't want to work, and that the only way you're going to get them is by forcing them to do it, and you're going to give them a swift kick in the butt and say, "Do this or we're going to throw you on the street," because the alternative, frankly, is no benefits, no home, no food, no clothes.

I don't think that is the way you deal with a serious economic problem. Welfare is not a social problem in Ontario; it's an economic problem. Let's stop treating it as a social problem. People do not go on to welfare because they choose to do so. People are forced on to welfare. We've seen statistics in the last few days that talk about the patterns over the last two or three years, where we've seen many university-educated professionals, many individuals who have graduated from high school, many people who have post-secondary education, being forced on to the welfare rolls. These people didn't all of a sudden become lazy. Nothing got into the drinking water five years ago that has made all these people lazy in the last five years. These people are forced on there because of economic circumstances and difficulties.

When you look at the programs today and the communities, I find it interesting that the community of the Minister of Community and Social Services has as yet not started and is still very much debating whether to become involved in workfare. The good people of Oshawa and Durham are raising some very serious questions as to whether this program should go ahead. Hopefully, the good people of Oshawa and Durham will determine that their community will not participate in exploiting the needy and the poor in Ontario; they'll determine that there are better ways of doing it.

I ask members across the floor to give us some idea of how many placements will occur. We keep hearing that workfare is going to put all these people — there are about 400,000 or 500,000 eligible people, and they're all going to be doing 17 hours of community work somewhere in this community. Somehow 500,000 placements are going to magically appear and are going to be there for people to do.

The best estimates from surveys done with those municipalities that are going to be involved is that at the end of the first year there will be 5,000 placements at a cost of \$120 million — 5,000 placements at \$120 million. That works out to be the most expensive volunteer program in the history of this province. We're talking about an average of \$22,000 per placement, we're talking an average of \$27 per hour per placement on top of the welfare benefits, and we're talking about a placement that at the end of the day doesn't lead to a job.

This government can't tell us what the projections are. No one on the other side of the House will stand up today and tell us how many individuals who are on welfare will be working as a result of workfare at the end of the program.

So we put people in a program and we say, "Go play nice in a park, go pick up some rocks in a park for 17 hours a week, go paint the swings, and you'll do that for three months." What happens to that individual at the end of three months? He has picked up some rocks in a park, he has painted some swings, he has boosted the ego of the government members, he may have boosted the public opinion polls for the government, but what happens to that individual? Is he or she any better off? Are there any more marketable skills there? What job does that person go to at the end of that 17-hour-a-week volunteer work that they're going to be forced to do?

We have today in Ontario 57,000 more people out of work than there were a year ago. This is not job creation that is working. We have approximately half a million people unemployed who are not on welfare, and then you throw into that mix about 400,000 or so who can work and who are on welfare, and you have almost a million people in this province looking for work today. Does this government not understand that that is the root of the problem? Does this government not understand that there should be a greater priority on ensuring that we have the type of climate to create jobs in Ontario?

How do you create jobs by forcing thousands of layoffs in the public service? How do you create jobs by creating a climate of labour instability that will probably be the worst in the history of this province as a result of your continuous attack on labour, on working men and

women in this province? How do you create a climate where you set up a tax cut for the richest and the wealthiest friends of yours in this province at the expense of the poorest and neediest in Ontario? How do you set up a climate where you make commitments during an election campaign that you're not going to cut health care but you go and start bulldozing through communities and closing hospitals right across this province? How do you create a climate where you run during the campaign and you promise not to impose user fees on senior citizens and then you turn around and impose user fees on those same people you vowed to protect? Or copayments, as you call them, copayments; they're not really user fees. A senior citizen feels much better because you tell them it's a copayment, not a user fee that you promised not to bring in. How do you create a better climate when you promise not to hurt seniors and disabled across Ontario and then you eliminate programs that help seniors and disabled? You have left 16,000 seniors and disabled on welfare at a benefit reduction of 22% for over a year and a half now. How does that create a better climate for the province of Ontario?

What workfare is all about is an ongoing ideological attack on the neediest and punishing people because they're poor and out of work in Ontario. You're punishing people because they're in unfortunate circumstances. You're punishing people because they don't have access to your boardrooms and to your \$250-a-plate fund-raisers, and they don't have access to your wealthy friends and to your government contracts. As a result of that, you are going to continue to punish them; this government will continue to punish them. This will be a continuous attack, an attack that will continue as long as the public opinion polls tell the government that it's politically popular to attack the neediest.

But I ask members across the floor to look at their own community. Get out of your seats at Queen's Park and go into the communities, go into the welfare offices across this province, go into the food banks across this province. Look some of those kids in the eyes and tell them that what you're doing is good for them. Look at some of those single moms who are struggling to get by and tell them that what you're doing is good for them. Look at those unemployed, laid-off steelworkers or labourers in my riding and my community and tell them that picking up rocks in the park is going to help them get off welfare. Don't sit here in your ivory tower and pass judgement on hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who need your help rather than the back of your hand.

I urge this government to get on with some real, meaningful welfare reform, to drop this absurd and continuous attack on the poor and to stop the myth that's out there, the myth this government has taken pride in perpetuating, that people on welfare are lazy and don't want to work. I challenge this government to create the jobs, and the welfare numbers will drop. I ask the members of the government to get on with some real reform and drop the charade. Help the people of Ontario.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate. I want first of all to make note for the record that the previous speaker, the member for Hamilton East, I think is some-

one who believes very firmly in what he said here today, but let's not forget that that was the party of "mandatory opportunities," which was somehow different from what the Tories are proposing. It's interesting that they had to send in the new crop of Liberals in an attempt to try to put their recent history record behind them. I just want to lay that out for the record, that there's not much difference between what the Tories are now doing and some idiotic concept called mandatory opportunity.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Members, I would ask you to remain calm, serene, listening attentively.

Mr Christopherson: I assume, Speaker, you're trying to help me and I appreciate that, but with the limited time I have, let them roar on, please, sir.

I also want to make it very clear that I'm solidly behind the position of my colleague from Welland-Thorold. I think this is someone who has a record of caring very deeply for and focusing all his energy on those who are the most vulnerable in our society, those who have the least, and certainly under this government are the ones who pay the price for the benefit the very wealthy are getting from the policies they've put forward.

1040

I also want to acknowledge that this is not anything new. The whole concept of workfare, as previous speakers have mentioned, is not something new that the Tories have come out with. The member for Brantford talks about the opposition not wanting to respond to facts. The facts are, as Susan West, who's a planner with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth pointed out in an April article in the *Hamilton Spectator* of this year, this is something that's been tried before. That's the fact. Further to the fact, it failed. One of the most recent times it was brought forward was during the last Depression in the 1930s.

So there's a similarity here. Given the fact that the recession of the early 1990s was the deepest and strongest we've had since the Depression, it's pretty easy to realize that the right-wingers among us, namely, the Reform-a-tories led by Mike Harris, believe that the policies that took place during the Depression times are the ones that are needed now. At that time it meant to go after the poor, to blame them for their own situation.

In the case of what's going on now, which is so disgusting, we even see a further transfer, a deliberate transfer of what meagre money the poor have to the richest in our society. That's what you've done. One of the first things this government did when it took office was to cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. I have no doubt in my mind that the history books will reflect that was one of the meanest, most vicious attacks on the poor that we've ever seen, and these will be seen as the recessionary dark times when a certain political party took the opportunity of a recession to implement the most right-wing ideological policies imaginable.

Those also, I believe, are the facts. Certainly history, I have no doubt, will prove that the facts are that you took us back decades, but in the meantime there are real people and real children who are being hurt by what you're doing.

The member from Brantford got into quite a little rant. At one point he almost made a big mistake. He almost

said "and this policy will create —" Anybody who watches the videotapes will realize that he paused. You could see the light go on in his head as he realized, "I can't say jobs, because these aren't real jobs." Then he changed it into something else. He stopped short of saying you're going to create jobs, because the truth is you aren't. You're not giving anybody any jobs. If anything, you're going to take away jobs — jobs in the public sector. If there's decent work out there, then I say pay people a decent wage to do it. It's not only the most humane thing to do; it happens to make great economic sense.

You're going to spend half a billion dollars monitoring forced labour that threatens current public sector jobs, that threatens the volunteer sector you profess to care about. You're going to threaten the ability of judges to continue to give community placement orders in lieu of incarceration, because there's already a backlog there. All these things are threatened, and you're going to spend half a billion dollars to do it, all because you pushed a political hot button in the last election that got you a lot of votes. That did happen. I don't think it's something that we collectively, as a people in Ontario, should be very proud of, but you did that.

There's no way you can make workfare into fair work, because it's not. At the end of the day what you're going to do is try to show, through statistical manipulation in the last election, that somehow this program helped people. You need the luck of larger economic indicators in your favour and I don't know whether that will happen or not, but certainly there's nothing in workfare that helps people, particularly the poor, the most vulnerable. There's nothing that helps communities. There's nothing that helps build the economic base that we need in all our communities, like Hamilton-Wentworth, my home town. There's nothing in this that's going to provide real training for real jobs. All this is going to do is provide those who want an answer why there are so many bad things happening around us with an easy answer, and that is, blame the poor. Obviously it's their fault.

Yet when we look at the facts, the facts of the matter are that over 50% of the people who are in poverty are kids, and the vast majority of those families are headed by women who are single parents. That's who's in poverty. They're struggling to get out. What do you provide them with? A boot. A boot that says, "Go out there and perform the most menial tasks we can think of and somehow magically that's going to give you a job."

What they want is education, what they want is training, what they want is opportunities. Workfare doesn't do that. It didn't do it in the 1930s and it didn't do it during the Industrial Revolution. It will not do it. You can't treat people that way and expect that somehow something positive is going to come out of it.

I want to end my comments today by saying to each of you, as members of the government back bench: Think about your place in history, because you do have a historical role. Ask yourself if you really want your children and your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren to have to live down the legacy that one of their predecessors sat in a government that viciously attacked the poor the way you're doing and through workfare

brought back forced labour into this province. Live with that, and maybe if you think about it that way, some of you will start to back off a little bit and maybe that will creep into the decision-makers of your government, because God knows, nothing else seems to be getting through.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to speak to the resolution from the member for Welland-Thorold. This resolution appears to be almost a carbon copy of the position and memo that came from a press conference, I believe it was last week, by the social planning council, so I understand why he's brought this resolution at this particular time.

I sat in opposition when the member for Welland-Thorold was in cabinet and when he was in government. The member for Dovercourt, I believe, was the minister at the time. We kept waiting and waiting for the New Democratic government to come forward with some philosophy, with some statement, with some change to the welfare system. Both the member for Dovercourt, when he was the minister, and the former Premier of the province of Ontario all said, "The system is broken; we have to fix welfare," and nothing ever happened. They had four years to fix it. Now they come with this resolution criticizing an attempt made by our government to fix the system.

I believe and I hope this system will be fixed. You've got to remember that Ontario had paid the highest welfare benefits, not only in Canada but in North America in the last decade. This was during good times and bad times, and at a time when welfare payments had grown from \$930 million to a staggering \$6.3 billion in just 12 years; an astounding increase in the cost of welfare and at a time when welfare had tripled to 1.3 million, a figure that had continued to rise, as I say, through both good times and bad times.

1050

I hope all the members of the New Democratic caucus are going to read Mr Rae's book. It will make a wonderful Christmas present for your friends. In this book he talked about what you did during the time you were in power. I refer the member for Welland-Thorold to page 193, where he says:

"We deliberately raised welfare rates that winter — this is the winter of 1990-91 — 'to soften the blow. One cabinet official said our decision was the first time she had ever heard a cabinet decide to give the Minister of Community and Social Services more than she was asking for to help stimulate the economy and maintain living standards in a recession. It turned out to be an unpopular decision once the recession began to recede.'" That's the problem. You threw out money you didn't have.

A government is supposed to help people. There's no question a government's supposed to help people. A government is supposed to educate people. But a government isn't supposed to give away money. You just don't give it away. You try to help people. You try to educate people. You just don't give away money.

Mr Christopherson: What about the 30% tax cut for the rich? You're giving \$5 billion to the rich.

Mr Kormos: Take about giveaways.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please. Order, the member for Welland-Thorold. The member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Mr Tilson: I don't mind them heckling, except they're taking up my time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel take his seat for a moment. Members, please come to order.

Mr Tilson: The problem is that welfare became a permanent way of life to many people.

Mr Kormos: Oh, please.

Mr Tilson: Well, I'm sorry; it did. You say, "Oh, please." The fact of the matter is, it kept increasing and increasing.

Mr Kormos: Well, yes, when you don't create jobs. Where are the jobs you promised?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Tilson: The member for Welland-Thorold is heckling away at me. Some members say he's a man who cares. This is what the former Premier of Ontario said about the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Read it in. Make him listen to it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Tilson: "Trouble started almost as soon as we began. The first was Kormos himself. He was an impossible colleague, and an even more difficult minister. He missed meetings, threw tantrums, belittled his colleagues in cabinet committee. I asked him to get his act together but it was clear I was just Big Nurse to him" — this is the Premier of Ontario — "yet another authority figure whose nose he could find a way to tweak. And tweak he did, and not just on car insurance.

"On his own he decided to declare war on the beer companies and their advertising, asserting that what they put on TV was too sexy and exploitative. This became a silly sideshow. Then, totally inconsistently, he decided to pose as the Toronto Sun's Sunshine Boy. This was a soap opera that could only run until I had pulled the plug.

"I fired him from the cabinet on March 18, 1991, just before the House came back from spring break. The press story was that I had fired him for 'appearing fully clothed in the Toronto Sun.' Not true. I fired him because he was a royal pain. I knew I had enough support in the party and caucus to get away with it. I lost no sleep over this decision."

So much for the member who cares about the people of this province.

Our party cares about the people of this province. We intend to get people who are dependent on the system off the system that you've created and get them working again. The members over there talk about how we're cruel, how degrading are our policies. Since when, when you're trying to get people working, is that degrading and cruel? We're going to get them working again. Not you. All you're going to do is write cheques. I can tell you, we're not going to do that. We're going to get people off the welfare rolls and working.

There's a statistic that came out and said we've got more people off welfare and working. There was a poll

taken. Now, I know the members over there say, oh well, they don't have phones and there were all kinds — Mr Walkom, I think, made a report in the *Toronto Star* talking about how fallacious that poll was. But the fact of the matter is, people have been getting off welfare because of our policies, have been getting off welfare and on to the working rolls of this province. That's our aim. Common sense is asking people who can work for something in return for their welfare cheques. It's just helping clean up the mess that you and the Liberals created for the last 10 years.

I hope that you reconsider, particularly that the former Solicitor General reconsiders his position, because we intend to make this work. It will indeed work, and we're going to get this province working again.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to thank the member for Welland-Thorold for providing us this morning this wonderful opportunity to speak on a subject that is close to the hearts of many certainly in the New Democratic caucus, and anybody out there in Ontario, in the communities and cities that we all represent, who has any interest at all in the welfare and wellbeing of families and children and of communities.

What we have coming at us in this province under the guise of workfare is simply another part of the Ontario Tory agenda which is, as has been described here this morning already by so many so eloquently, small-minded, narrow, mean-spirited and nothing but an effort to take money out of the pockets of the poorest, of the ordinary working person, and give it to those who already have more than they need.

We in the Ontario New Democratic caucus and party believe that Ontario is a healthy jurisdiction in every sense of that word and should not have to resort to the kind of tactics that this government is falling to in their estimation right-side the economy and the financial situation of this government and the so many other things that they present as the real agenda of their party and of their government.

Ontario has an abundance of resources. Ontario is one of the richest jurisdictions in all of the world, and if that resource is managed properly, is mined properly, it will generate the kind of wealth that can then be redistributed in a way that guarantees that everybody who lives in Ontario has a decent, adequate and dignified standard of living.

That's not what this government is about. That's what this government should be about. This government should be about looking at people as the resource they are, providing them with an opportunity to participate that recognizes the skill and the ability they have and that should be in turn providing them with a decent standard of living by way of the wage they make or the money they get from government for participating in the so many ways they do in keeping this province a province that is envied by anybody I've ever talked to in so many places around this world today as a place they'd like to come and participate. But that won't be for long, because in the short year and some months that this government has taken control in Ontario, we have seen an exercise in smoke and mirrors that would put Houdini to shame.

We've seen an attack on the poor and the most vulnerable that would put the many dictators and despots we've

all read about and some perhaps have experienced in this world today, as they beat up on their own citizens and the citizens of the world out there in an attempt to impose an agenda that in every instance was neo-Conservative, narrow, mean-spirited and selfish — that's what we're getting here in Ontario today. So this workfare proposal fits —

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't think it's in order for the member for Sault Ste Marie to be comparing our government to a dictatorship.

The Acting Speaker: No, you don't have a point of order. Member for Sault Ste Marie, please continue.

Mr Martin: Sometimes when the shoe fits, you've got to wear it, and sometimes the shoe pinches. It's interesting that the member from the Conservative Party would rise on that point, because I think I touched a nerve. Many of us, when we get up and say things on this side of the floor sometimes that we would prefer not to have to say, touch nerves and we get that kind of response.

Anyway, back to my point. This workfare initiative is just another part of this government's smoke-and-mirrors approach to doing business in Ontario and it's part of their very wicked attack on the most vulnerable among us in all of the communities and villages that we live in and represent here in this House.

I want to say that I agree wholeheartedly with the statement made by Workfare Watch in June of this year when they said: "Workfare is unnecessary. Workfare is unnecessary because people who are on assistance in this province are already out there looking for work, are already out there beating the bushes trying to find a way to earn a living so that they can pay the rent and put food on the table for them and their children. We don't need to be beating people up in this way."

1100

They say, "Workfare doesn't work." They have done the research and they have looked at areas and jurisdictions in Canada, North America and around the world where workfare has been tried, and they've found that it doesn't work. They say, "Workfare is expensive and bureaucratic," and I agree. "Workfare always displaces paid employment. Workfare will divert resources away from genuine training."

I suggest to you, in closing, that workfare —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. *Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Nepean. The member for Welland-Thorold has two minutes to sum up.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the participation of my friends in this discussion, in this debate. Indeed, we heard in the Legislature after some lengthy silence from — who was he? — the member for Dufferin-Peel. I haven't seen him here for a good chunk of time. I recall that he was a candidate in the Speaker's race. He was first off the ballot in a field of seven, and perhaps that reflects the esteem in which he's held even by his own colleagues.

We've dealt here with a government that has as its sole objective the fulfilment of its commitment to the very wealthiest in this province, and that's to give them a tax break they hadn't dared even dream of, a 30% tax break

to the richest and a complete denial of the fact that this government's policies, and indeed so often lack of them, have generated more joblessness, more unemployment in the fall of 1996 than existed at the time of their election in June 1995.

Mr Baird: Wrong, wrong, wrong. Your majesty's wrong.

Mr Kormos: They can squeal and howl and carry on, but they can't change the facts. The reality is that there's less work available to working people in this province now than there was when the Tories got elected. The fact is that with their wacko workfare scheme, one that is oh so very American in its nature, they are attempting to blame the poor and the unemployed for joblessness in this province. They're attempting to punish the poorest in our society for their poverty. They're telling us that there's no room in Mike Harris's Ontario for single mothers and for the jobless and the unemployed. I say this government had better put its house in order because, by God, the voters of this province will put them in order in two and a half or three more years.

ONTARIO HYDRO

Mrs Fisher moved private member's notice of motion number 29:

That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario, in making a decision regarding the restructuring of Ontario Hydro, should take into consideration the following: the historic and economic value of Ontario Hydro to the people of Ontario; Ontario Hydro as a major resource to the province, especially the significant role played by the nuclear generating sites; the importance of creating a long-term vision to address the global competitiveness of energy production, transmission and sales; value-added projects, such as the Bruce Energy Centre, resulting in economic growth and job creation for Ontario; and the commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution to work with the chairman of Ontario Hydro and others to bring Hydro back to its proper role, providing reliable and affordable electrical power to Ontario, which may mean more changes at Hydro, including some moves towards privatization of non-nuclear assets.

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): The resolution before the Legislature today is designed to bring into focus the considerations faced by the Harris government in the management of a debt-ridden Ontario Hydro and the need to establish an Ontario electricity system as a part of an energy system that would serve the Ontario economy.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): "I'm sorry. Please vote for me again."

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order. The member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Mrs Fisher: It is important to note that any so-called privatization could only be conceived of if and when it is viewed to be in the best interests of the people of Ontario. It is for that reason that I have brought this resolution to the House: so that we may discuss what is best for Ontario Hydro and best for the people of this province as we move into an era of competition in the electricity industry.

Ontario Hydro holds both a historic and an economic value to the people of Ontario. From its inception in

1906, Ontario Hydro has played a crucial role in the development of our province. Once a small power grid that served a handful of municipalities in southwestern Ontario, transmission lines now extend to every corner of the province, providing millions of customers with reliable electricity. For 90 years now, electricity has played a major role in building Ontario's economy and in raising our standard of living.

Ontario Hydro represents a major resource to our province, especially important because we do not have abundant natural gas and oil. Nuclear generating sites play a significant role in support of our resource. Across its system, Hydro has the capacity to generate 34,000 megawatts of power. Nuclear stations represent over 60% of that capacity, and nuclear production supplies most of the base load of the electricity system.

The Bruce nuclear power development site has contributed greatly to that 60% generation, largely as a result of a committed workforce that has achieved world records. In 1980, for example, Ontario Hydro's reactors occupied the top four positions in the 1980 world performance rankings, which compared 114 reactors with greater than 500 megawatts of production. This achievement was made possible by the performance of the Bruce A generating station, whose reactor units 2, 3 and 1 took first, third and fourth places respectively.

Of extreme significance, the Bruce nuclear power development site benefits my community by employing approximately 4,500 employees.

It should also be noted that neither Ontario Hydro's nuclear nor its hydraulic generators produce greenhouse gases. The challenge for the Ontario government is to determine how best to exploit Ontario's unique situation in this increasingly important environmental regard.

I should mention and commend the Harris government's continued support for the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project, known as ITER, for which two siting options are Bruce and Darlington. We are hopeful that the federal government will, in its wisdom, offer support for bringing this prestigious project to Canada and to Ontario.

In addition, I would like to highlight my continued support for the mixed oxide fuel project, known as MOX, for which the next steps include environmental assessment approvals and public input towards locating the MOX project at Bruce.

It is also imperative that we recognize the importance of creating a long-term vision to address the global competitiveness of energy production, transmission and sales. It is understandable that workers at Ontario Hydro's many locations are discouraged, frustrated and wary of change. I was a proud Ontario Hydro worker at a time when our nuclear plants were known worldwide for their nuclear excellence. Today we must help the employees of Ontario Hydro re-establish that same pride. That means restructuring should encourage the spirit of competitiveness within Ontario Hydro as well as outside of it. It means that, like any other business, Ontario Hydro can no longer allow waste, duplication and unnecessary spending as it addresses its \$32-billion debt.

That being said, no one should confuse the fact that, because of outside forces, competition is upon us. If you

were to plot current industrial electricity rates on a map of North America, you would see that we are surrounded by low and decreasing energy prices. From our neighbours in Manitoba at 2.5 US cents per kilowatt-hour to Quebec at 3.1 US cents per kilowatt-hour, some of the US states at as low as 2.7 cents and gas companies from the eastern and western United States at as low as 2 to 3 cents, Ontario's 4.3 US cents per kilowatt-hour is hardly, at best, a contender.

For Ontario Hydro to survive the effects of outside influences, we must address, through restructuring, the need to be competitive. There exist many possibilities of how competitive Ontario Hydro would look and as many ways to achieve that competitiveness. We are fortunate to be able to look at other jurisdictions that have privatized their electricity systems and learn from their mistakes.

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In so doing, we can look at Britain and Nova Scotia. We can also measure our progress against other areas engaged in similar debates, such as British Columbia where, like Ontario, one of the key aspects of electricity generation is the ownership of generation, transmission and distribution by a crown corporation.

The entire world is examining the organization of electricity markets. Privatization, deregulation and competition are becoming the norm. The United States, for example, in order to compete within itself and with Canada, is currently undergoing major restructuring and precipitating industrial amalgamations. As one of the largest public utilities in the world, Ontario Hydro should be setting the international agenda on electricity, not following it or falling behind.

Ontario's long-term vision to remain competitive requires an appreciation for allowing Ontario's electricity system to become a part of a comprehensive energy system by attracting joint venture enterprise to combine its skills, creativity and capital within the current management and ownership regime.

Value added projects, such as the Bruce Energy Centre, will result in economic growth and job creation for Ontario. Activities such as industrial ecoparks must be encouraged by offering competitive electricity and heat energy rates, reflecting a true discount for not incurring transmission losses and costs. This will allow Ontario's large central generating stations to compete when open access does occur, to stimulate major job creation and industrial development, to encourage emerging technological advancements, and to minimize the mistaken attitude that competition between natural gas and the electricity interests hurts the economy of Ontario. This mindset has restricted the evolution of mutual benefits of both business interests and the Ontario consumer to date.

The commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution is to work with the chairman of Ontario Hydro and others to bring Hydro back to its proper role, providing reliable, affordable electrical power to Ontario. This may mean changes at Hydro, including moves towards the privatization of non-nuclear assets. A move to a more effective, more affordable and more competitive Hydro means that the low-cost energy should not be sold by Ontario Hydro through a US subsidiary while Ontario consumers are required to pay higher prices because of a preserved monopoly.

The Power Corporation Act must be amended to allow Hydro to be competitive, both internationally and within itself, and to provide economic development rates that will attract business to Ontario. The Ontario Energy Board Act must be opened and consideration given to, at minimum, providing the OEB with decision-making authority in place of its current role as an advisory body to the Ontario Hydro board of directors.

A third piece of legislation to be considered is the Public Utilities Act, in which the role of municipal electric utilities and public utility commissions must be reviewed. The mandate and purpose of Hydro technologies and Ontario Hydro International must be reviewed to determine the relevance as we move forward with the restructuring agenda. And we must re-establish a high reputation through controlled spending, appropriate staffing levels and local decision-making. Ontario Hydro has historically been the primary driver of Ontario's economy. It needs to be recognized as a resource, not just an industry to be torn apart.

Bringing Ontario Hydro back to its proper role can be best accomplished by restructuring Ontario's electricity system into fully accountable and competitive units, each competing with each other and with any other producer of electricity in an open market.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to join in the debate in connection with the resolution standing in the name of the member for Bruce. I want to commend her for bringing the subject to the assembly. I think any fairminded member of the House would have to be sympathetic and sensitive to any member who represents Bruce county, since we all know that the current member, like her predecessors over the last 30 years, represents an area with a very substantial Ontario Hydro presence. I know from people like Murray Elston and, dare I say it, Eddie Sargent, that it has always been an issue before people in Bruce county, and it's quite properly an issue before the province as a whole.

It's hard in some respects to take issue with a lot of what the resolution suggests. It asks that the government, as it sets new Hydro policy, take into consideration the historic and economic value of Ontario Hydro. I think that's almost a bromide with which no fairminded person could quarrel; I see my friend from Lanark nods approvingly. It asks that Ontario Hydro be recognized as a major resource in the province, especially in terms of its nuclear division. That might be a little less unanimous in its acceptance, but certainly none the less important. And on the resolution goes. It talks about the first-order importance of providing reliable and affordable electricity, and surely there's no one who is going to contest that claim.

But I do want to take the opportunity today, Madam Speaker, to say to you and to the member for Bruce and anyone else who's listening that it is time, I think, that we had a better sense of where the government is in respect of Ontario Hydro policy. It's all well and good, and I commend the member for Bruce for doing her duty, as the member from an area with a very large Hydro presence, in bringing forward her perspective and her concerns. But I think it is only fair that one of these days we get a much clearer sense from the treasury bench,

from the government, as to what kind of Hydro policy it's going to pursue.

We have reports in the Toronto media — the *Globe and Mail* comes to mind, October 14, 1996, where the new Minister of Energy, Mr Sterling, is quoted as saying: "The decision on whether to privatize and what parts you would privatize," meaning privatizing Ontario Hydro, "I think it's a couple, three, four years out." Fair ball. That's the current minister's view. There will no major decision on privatization for at least two to four years. That I understand. I think some of my enthusiastic friends in the government say it's a second-mandate issue. That's got an interesting ring to it, but that then begs the question, what's Ontario Hydro doing in the interval?

I can tell you that no one, no organization of which I have acquaintance, likes a vacuum more than Ontario Hydro. And they are not static, they are a very active player these days. We have, for example, a report in a Hydro publication of this past summer; just a few weeks after the Macdonald commission's *A Framework for Competition in Ontario Hydro* was released in early June, we have the president of Ontario Hydro, quite a formidable executive and someone for whom I have a high regard, Dr Allan Kupcis, saying to Ontario Hydro employees in an internal publication that early in July, the Hydro board met and they made two major decisions about policy directions that they are going to be pursuing in the coming months and years. I want the House to listen carefully to what Dr Kupcis, the president of Ontario Hydro, announced as corporate policy, decided and reinforced this past summer. Reading from the Hydro document:

"In broad strokes, the strategy adopted and confirmed at the July board meeting suggests that Ontario Hydro plan for growth in each of the three signature businesses of generation, transmission and retail distribution."

We have a clear statement of intent from the president of Ontario Hydro that notwithstanding what the minister may be saying, the new minister or the former minister, the member for Guelph, we have the president of Ontario Hydro stating in July of this year that a recent board decision confirmed that there would be an active expansion of Ontario Hydro's activities in the three signature businesses of generation, transmission and retail distribution. That is a very important statement from the president of this crown corporation.

I want to know, is that government policy? It's clearly not what Mr Macdonald is recommending. I have not heard the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy or the real minister of hydro in this government or any other, the first minister, pronounce as to whether or not they endorse what Mr Kupcis has in fact announced as corporate policy.

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Now, you might say, "Well, that's just one reference." A very fine former member of this assembly, a good Conservative, a former Minister of Health and Minister of Energy, Phil Andrewes — some of you will know Phil; he's a very fine fellow — he happens to be presently the chairperson of the Lincoln Hydro-Electric Commission. I raised this issue the other day, because here we have proof that notwithstanding what the minister is

saying or not saying, Ontario Hydro is doing its thing in the marketplace. Two and a half years ago — the member for Algoma will remember well — this Legislature unanimously, as I believe, endorsed Bill 185. That bill essentially gave municipal utilities the right to expand to fulfil their municipal mandate. Many of them currently just supply a portion of their municipal mandate. In this case, Lincoln was the first out of the gate after Bill 185, and Ontario Hydro was actively involved in that.

Now we find that Ontario Hydro is participating in a not very helpful way in holding up what we all thought was a good thing. Putting it very bluntly, Ontario Hydro is down in the Niagara Peninsula actively frustrating a significant, well-intentioned local utility from fulfilling its retail mandate, in a way that we all thought was a good thing if you were concerned about efficiency and getting at duplication, because we've got in Lincoln what we've got in many other situations. We've got a local utility supplying some of the market, that is, on the retail side, and we've got Ontario Hydro in the same marketplace. I think most of us here would agree, and that was the basis of the debate around Bill 185, let there be one supplier, at the retail end at least, if it can be shown to be an efficient and sensible thing. So Ontario Hydro is down there, and that's just one place, actively frustrating a local utility from doing what most people think is a right, sensible, cost-effective activity.

Up in my area, Ontario Hydro intervened a few months ago, telling Pembroke Hydro that its 90-year-old agreement with a private supplier, a deal that predates the creation of Ontario Hydro itself, a deal that supplies very cost-effective alternate power to the electrical consumers in the city of Pembroke, a deal that's been in place since before Ontario Hydro was created, Hydro decides to exercise a right that it's had to —

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): They have the right.

Mr Conway: That's right. The member from Lanark is right. But they go in and exercise that right and say, "That deal must end." I thought we were all interested in more affordable, more efficient delivery of this vital resource. We have in Lincoln and in Pembroke clear evidence in recent weeks that the utility is pursuing, and pursuing aggressively, a policy that certainly seems to be at variance with what many in the government say they want and certainly what the honourable member for Bruce would be recommending in at least part of this resolution.

I repeat, if Hoover makes vacuum cleaners, Ontario Hydro is in the business of filling vacuums. Let me tell you, they're out there now very much filling a vacuum. I say to my friend from Bruce, whose intentions are good and honourable, that it is important that one of these days we hear publicly from the government as to what its policy is going to be. I will probably debate with some, perhaps even in my own caucus, about how far privatization should go. We have, all of us, I can say as a relatively senior member of this place — Tories, Liberals and New Democrats — accepted that there ought to be some significant reliance on privately generated electricity. That policy decision we made a decade ago. I don't sense that decision is about to be reversed by Liberals, New Democrats or Tories.

I believe and my colleagues believe that there are — and here I agree with that part of the resolution that stands in the name of Mrs Fisher — vital public interests in this electricity debate that we must as a Legislature and as a government and as a community defend, vital economic and social interests that governments of all kinds in the 20th century have stood up to protect.

I am deeply concerned about Bill Farlinger's concept of the public good in this electricity business. When I talk to people on Bay Street, I've got to tell you, their sense of public interest in the electricity business is not my sense. I do not believe there ought to be a significant sale of public assets that have served the public well.

I can imagine we have done certain things involving the private sector and we ought to do more. I think one of the most contentious areas of rationalization is going to come in this business of retail and distribution, where you've got two parts of the public sector: the public sector that is represented by Ontario Hydro, and yes, I say to my friend from Algoma, John Murphy and the Power Workers' Union; and you've got the local public interest as represented by Lincoln Hydro, Ottawa Hydro, Nepean Hydro, Smiths Falls Hydro or whatever. I'm under no illusions about how difficult it's going to be to rationalize those two competing interests in the public sector, but we have to do that. The customers, whether they're in St Catharines, Pembroke, Ottawa or northern Ontario, expect — here the member is right — reliable, efficient electricity at affordable rates and they like competition. I'm under no illusion. They like it and they want it. But I don't think that gives any of us a licence to simply sell out Ontario Hydro.

I think Don MacDonald has some good ideas; I think he has a very bad concept for the Ontario Hydro that would be remaining after this report was to be implemented. In my vision of Ontario Hydro after the reforms and changes, and change there must be — the continental marketplace that is North America will not give us the luxury of sitting still in the comfortable pew of the status quo. I think we have to recognize that. But I believe there is a very significant role for a public utility that provides reliable and attractively priced electricity.

I'm not about to endorse selling off most of what is Ontario Hydro. Quite frankly, even if we wanted to do some of that — I've talked to my friend from Lanark, who might want to get into this debate — I live on the Quebec border and we've got a number of very significant hydroelectric assets that are anchored partly in Ontario and partly in Quebec. I look at those hydro dams in places like Rapides-des-Joachims and elsewhere and I have a feeling that Quebec City will have an interest. Even if you wanted to sell off those assets I have a feeling that M. Landry, M. Bouchard, M. Parizeau or M. Bertrand — you name the Premier of Quebec. Anybody who thinks you're going to sell off those substantial hydroelectric resources, dams, on the Ottawa River and not invite the very keen interest of the Quebec government — I might be wrong, but I suspect I'm not.

My point is that there are vital public interests. Those interests attach to the values of reliable, available and competitively priced electricity; an important, significant role for Ontario Hydro. I'm not surprised Don

MacDonald said, "Keep the nuclear assets in the public domain." There is no alternative. But we shouldn't be keeping just those assets for which there is no alternative and selling off everything else to the private sector. That simply would not be in the public interest. By the way, Ontario is not southern California and it's not the United Kingdom. This is a big, empty province in many respects and it's awfully cold six months of the year.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to congratulate my friend from Bruce for bringing this resolution before the House for debate. As my friend from Renfrew North indicated, we have been experiencing some considerable vacuum in terms of government direction with regard to the future of Ontario Hydro, a very important asset, as the member for Bruce says in the resolution.

Ontario Hydro has a history of importance in terms of economic development in the province. There has been and will be change. The energy markets in North America are changing substantially and have been changing very rapidly. This will mean that there will be continued change, but my experience in this place over the same length of time as my friend from Renfrew North is that governments that do not actively provide some important and ongoing direction to Ontario Hydro find that this crown asset and the staff at this crown asset find their own direction.

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My suggestion to the member for Bruce is that there are parts of her resolution we could agree with wholeheartedly. There are other parts with which we find serious problems.

First, I really would like to find out what has happened to the member for Bruce. I first met her when I was in another guise in this place as the Minister of Environment and Energy. I met the member for Bruce who was then a very active and serious spokesperson for the people of her area, particularly for the municipal people and the business community and, I suspect, for the workers at Ontario Hydro, who was very concerned about an attempt made by our government to restructure that corporation so that it could be competitive, who was very concerned about the fact that there was going to be significant downsizing at Ontario Hydro, and who complained and raised very serious concerns, I think genuine concerns, on behalf of the communities in her area about what it would mean if there were fewer jobs at Ontario Hydro and what on earth would happen to the Bruce Peninsula if there were fewer jobs at Ontario Hydro.

I give her credit, significant credit, that she raised the importance of the Bruce Energy Centre as a way of trying to generate jobs and economic development in her area. I commend her for including that in the resolution. But to suggest that she is not here now defending, with the same vociferous approach, the interests of the workers at Ontario Hydro and the communities where they live is very disappointing; it is most disappointing. I can't understand why she would not be standing up for the people who work at Ontario Hydro and make it such an important asset to Ontario, why she isn't standing here saying to the government: "You've got to provide

direction. You've got to protect this important resource. You've got to ensure that it restructures, that it is competitive, and not to sell it off."

She loses me at the very end here where she says in this resolution "the commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution, to work with the chairman of Ontario Hydro and others to bring Hydro back to its proper role, providing reliable and affordable electrical power to Ontario, which may mean more changes at" Ontario Hydro. We're with her right to that point. And then it says "including some moves," whatever that means, "towards privatization of non-nuclear assets."

In other words, what she is proposing is that all those potential money-makers at Ontario Hydro, all those parts of Ontario Hydro that potentially can provide a return to the people of this province and to the consumers of electricity in the province should be privatized, perhaps, but those very important sections which generate, as she said, about 60% or more of the electricity that is used in the province, the nuclear plants, should be kept in public hands.

Keep in mind the enormous costs that are associated with decommissioning at some point, the exact amount we know not, and the enormous costs of retrofitting those operations that we've gone through and are going through. Those should remain in public hands. In other words, we keep in public hands the costly part and we privatize the money-making parts for the benefit of the corporate sector. That really says in a nutshell what this government is about: Anything that makes a profit for the people of Ontario better be in the private sector, and anything that may cost the people of Ontario and provide a service to the people of Ontario, a much-needed service but costs money, must remain in the public sector. In other words, you privatize the profit and you socialize the costs. That's what this resolution is about. That's what this is about.

We're facing a very serious ongoing change in the electrical energy system in North America. We have proposals for wheeling that are going to have to be dealt with by the government and Ontario Hydro. We have significant proposals for natural gas generation of electricity in the province which I believe we should be responding to. I know there are many who work for Ontario Hydro who don't think we should, or if we are, they believe that Ontario Hydro alone, perhaps, should provide for those kinds of developments. I don't think that's true. I think that we all, as the member for Renfrew North said, all three parties in government, have recognized the need for diversification and competition.

All of us have recognized the need to bring Ontario Hydro under the control of the public sector; I say that recognizing that it's been owned by the public sector ever since its creation. We went through a major restructuring, which downsized substantially, made Ontario Hydro more businesslike, divided it up into sectors and units that could compete and will compete, but unless they are given direction by the government, they will compete in a way that may make it impossible for those private sector developments that could also generate power in the province to be able to do so in a way that is competitive with Ontario Hydro.

We froze rates, and I commend this government for continuing that freeze.

Mrs Fisher: You laid off 10,000 workers.

Mr Wildman: The member for Bruce says we laid off 10,000 workers. That's quite correct. That is quite correct.

Mr Conway: We shut down a construction company; that's what we did.

Mrs Fisher: No, you didn't.

Mr Conway: That's what we did.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Address the Chair. The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: She knows she's not correct when she says we laid off 10,000 workers. A number of workers took early retirement, there was restructuring and so on, but there are 10,000 fewer employees at Ontario Hydro; that's correct.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): You didn't give your wealthy friends a tax break; that's the next line.

Mr Wildman: That's correct. We didn't give our wealthy friends a tax break; that's correct. This government is indeed giving its wealthy friends a tax break, and we didn't do that; that's true. But we did downsize Ontario Hydro substantially and that's where I first met the member for Bruce before her election.

Mr Conway: I hope people remember Darlington was completed, you know. We need to keep the pre-Darlington —

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member for Renfrew North, come to order.

Mr Wildman: We went through a serious problem. We had a surplus. There was a depression, a recession in the province. The demand was down and there was a surplus of generation. We had, as many of us had predicted back in 1975, constructed Darlington, and Darlington, frankly, wasn't needed. So we had an enormous surplus and it produced an enormous debt which didn't come folded into the rates until Darlington was completed, because that's the way Ontario Hydro does its accounting. We had to deal with all of that and we did. I suspect that if the member for Bruce were very straight with her constituents, which I know she must be, she would say that there probably is going to be more downsizing at Ontario Hydro.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: She says she's suggesting that somehow the competition on the open market that she's proposing will mean there won't be downsizing at Ontario Hydro. That's interesting.

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I can tell you that if you privatize profit-making parts of Ontario Hydro, there are people on Bay Street who are salivating about the commissions they'll make on those shares. A modest estimate of what can be made on that market for those paper pushers on Bay Street is \$2 billion. Can you imagine what those commissions will mean? This isn't just a tax break for your wealthy friends; this is a gift to your wealthy friends, a gift at the expense of the people who live in the Bruce Peninsula, at the direct expense of the people this member represents, and frankly, not only at the expense of the people who

work for Ontario Hydro, but at the expense of the consumers of electricity in the province.

We have to deal with the proposals for wheeling. We have to deal with the proposals for private generation. I think we can. I think Ontario Hydro can. But I don't think that means we must sell off Ontario Hydro. It says in here, "including some moves towards privatization of non-nuclear assets." I know these words are couched in qualifications — "some moves towards privatization" — but the basic word there is "privatization," unless the member is attempting to say, "Privatization if necessary, but not necessarily privatization." This resolution is sort of a Mackenzie King approach to Ontario Hydro, is it? "Perhaps we can have conscription or maybe we won't have conscription." "Whatever we can do to make it look like I'm speaking on behalf of the people of Bruce Peninsula, in order to try to get re-elected, then if the province were to sell off Ontario Hydro at the expense of the people of Bruce Peninsula, at least I spoke out."

I don't think this is the case. I think the member is genuine in her commitment to the people of her constituency. I think she's quite genuine in recognizing the historic and economic value of Ontario Hydro; I commend her for including that in the resolution. I commend her for saying that Ontario Hydro is a major resource for the province. I commend her for saying that it must be competitive. I commend her for saying that the Bruce Energy Centre is a way of generating economic growth and jobs in her region. I commend her for saying that we must provide reliable, affordable electrical power in Ontario; that's what Ontario Hydro is about, that's what it should remain about, that is the purpose of this major component of our economic system.

But what does this mean? Perhaps the member, in her response, can tell us what she means. If she doesn't mean privatization, what does "including some moves towards privatization of non-nuclear assets" actually mean?

What we need is direction for Ontario Hydro. We need to have Mr Farlinger, on behalf of Ontario Hydro, and the Minister of Environment and Energy, on behalf of the government, make clear what the vision is for the future of Ontario Hydro in a competitive, difficult marketplace in North America. Is it only privatization? Is it partial privatization? Is it privatization of the profit-making parts of Ontario Hydro and maintaining the costly parts in the public sector? What is the government's position with regard to the future of Ontario Hydro?

Mr Guzzo: I'm particularly pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the member for Bruce's resolution this morning because she has dealt with the issue of nuclear energy as part of the government's vision for Ontario Hydro in the years to come. In my remarks I want to take that point a step further, outlining the future possibilities for nuclear technology, which is really in its infancy stage.

But I'd be remiss if I didn't make a couple of comments in response to the last two speakers. I've always been fascinated with the member for Algoma and the slant he is capable of putting on different issues, but it's really the member for Renfrew North who fascinates me. I particularly enjoy listening to him here in the House, but I'm very thankful that he's not a history professor or

a history teacher in one of our high schools because I find he has a fascinating ability to rewrite historical facts and bring down a very interesting attitude or slant.

When I say that nuclear energy is in its infancy stage, it's true that nuclear power is scarcely three decades old. If you look around the world at the number of nuclear reactors, about 400-plus, in the world today, you'll find that many of them are first-of-a-kind designs or copies. This should tell you that we are witnessing a development of an emerging technology. Currently, in the phase we're at today, we're seeing that proper designs are being improved, redeveloped and that the less capable or acceptable reactors are being replaced.

Here in Canada proof is everywhere that nuclear power is constantly improving and becoming the safest, the cheapest and the most reliable form of energy. Here in Ontario we're particularly proud that we're developing protective measures under a system called passive safety, which is making us a world leader in preventive care. Passive and other safety features will solve the problems we've experienced in the past, even before they occur. That program is something that needs our attention and needs to be commended as we move into the careful and profitable use of nuclear power.

Along with those progressions, nuclear power is also becoming one of the more cost-effective forms of energy. Looking at the Darlington situation as an example, where we sell power at about eight cents per kilowatt-hour, the entire operation of the plant, or the marginal cash costs, accounts for about one cent per kilowatt-hour. The operation is inexpensive.

Mr Wildman: The debt's very large.

Mr Guzzo: That's the problem, isn't it?

Mr Wildman: Who decided to impose that debt on us? Bill Davis.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Guzzo: Who would know better than the member for Algoma?

Mr Wildman: Bill Davis imposed that debt on us.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Algoma.

Mr Guzzo: In the case of Darlington, we had a problem other than the construction cost. We had a little matter of politics, if you recall, remembering that there was a coalition government of the two opposition parties at that time, a government that I believe put a moratorium on nuclear development that led to long delays and tremendous cost overruns in the mid-1980s. I know the opposition points with pride to that contribution, not with the same amount of pride as to tripling the debt of this province in the years 1985 to 1995, but —

Mr Conway: I want to hear Garry on the subject of debt. I would like to hear a full discourse. I would like to hear it all. You're failing this history course so far. Go back to the 1970s and look at the election campaign.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Renfrew North, please come to order.

Mr Guzzo: I'm getting around to it. The member for Renfrew North, just relax because —

Mr Conway: You're failing this history course.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Guzzo: Well, a history course —

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The member for Ottawa-Rideau, address your remarks to the Chair, please.

Mr Guzzo: I'm doing my best, but the distractions are many, Madam Speaker.

I shouldn't be too critical because I have to tell you that I heard the member for Renfrew North deal with the issue of the joint assets on the Ottawa River, and I commend him for that. He's the first member of the Liberal Party, federally or provincially, to even acknowledge the existence of those problems. The federal cousins buried their heads in the sand, leading up to this date a year ago, and continue to do so without any appreciation of some of the matters that have been raised. But if only one member of that party is aware of it, it speaks volumes.

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Politics aside, our nuclear industry is making tremendous headway at reducing costs. They're doing that by a number of innovative methods: modular designs of the nuclear reactor components that we manufacture and, at the present time, the calandria preconstructed unit, which is housing the fuel bundles, is probably the best example. It allows for less assembly, less construction time and much greater quality control.

In Canada, technology has come a long way in terms of streamlining the costs and the advancements being made have been exported to places like Korea, where Candu 9 reactors are employing that same modular design concept. If strongly emerging economies can recognize the value of Canadian technology, built and tested here at Ontario Hydro, perhaps our restructuring plans must also recognize that value as we plan to meet the future demand.

This resolution speaks to the need for long-term vision in the context of global competitiveness. Our neighbours in the state of New York and in the province of Quebec are moving towards competition and they have systems so that pressure remains on Ontario Hydro to keep our rates attractive for investments and jobs. To be competitive we need a utility that's lean, but large enough to take on the giant utilities that are forming on the North American continent. I think we have to be cognizant of what the opposition is doing. They're merging, they're getting bigger to compete with us. It has to work on a scale large enough to keep interest rates down and we'll certainly need the nuclear division to keep the prices down now and through scientific breakthroughs down the road.

Historically, back to the federal governments of the 1940s and the 1950s, Canada became involved in nuclear energy to meet needs that would allow us to be independent and not rely on our neighbour's coal and fossil fuel. During that crushing year of 1993 we had an example of how Ontario was better able to deal with rising fossil fuel costs because of our self-reliance and because of the developing nuclear network. I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to partake in the debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I wish today to speak in support of ballot item 46, the member for Bruce, Mrs Fisher. I guess I should respect the opportunity because I represent Durham East where indeed the Dar-

lington nuclear station is located. You have to recognize that Darlington nuclear station plays an important part in the local economy of my riding and indeed, of all of Ontario. It lies 70 miles east of Toronto and has capabilities of serving 20% of the power needs of the province of Ontario. Its costs are world competitive. Looking at about five or six cents per kilowatt hour, it's highly positioned to provide reliable, safe and affordable power for the province of Ontario. Our government was elected on the platform of jobs, so there's no intention to undermine the importance of Hydro's contribution to both the local and the provincial economy.

That being said, I've listened very intently to the comments of the member for Renfrew North, Mr Conway, and he went on at great length. I have great respect for his comments, but he did come down to synthesizing it down to a need for change. He was clear on that and I think really that's what the MacDonald commission said as well. Mr Wildman, a previous minister, also suggested that there was a recognition for a need for diversity. I support those observations as I believe every member in this House should, when you think through the problem. We're trying to provide cost-effective, affordable, reliable — and I must underline the importance of safety. In that we all know that the MacDonald report recognized the nuclear component would remain within the province's purview. In fact, most of the regulatory part of nuclear is under federal regulation and indeed, that's probably where it should remain.

I'm going to remain on topic here because I want to share the remaining part with the member for Niagara Falls who can talk about the hydro-generated water power.

This government has committed itself to examining the fair competitive delivery of affordable power, and I believe it's not in any way taking away from the important contributions Ontario Hydro makes to the community and, indeed, to the province. But they have to get competitive, they have to be global, and I think we have to work with them and the power workers, as well as the large-user component and the smaller utilities. I'm not sure the distribution system is the proper purview for Ontario Hydro, but I'm sure the argument will see us through.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's my pleasure to rise to add a little bit to this debate on Hydro.

I want to congratulate the member for Bruce and say that the member for Algoma's comments are I think patently unfair because I know first hand how much she cares about Ontario Hydro and the people in her riding. I've spent countless hours with the member for Bruce debating the future direction that Ontario Hydro should take in this province and there are problems —

Mr Wildman: I didn't mean to be unfair; I was just asking what her position was.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Mr Maves: — with the hydro sector and with Ontario Hydro in this province. The member for Bruce acknowledges that, and she's to be commended for that. She doesn't bury her head in the sand and say we don't need change. She doesn't ignore the problems nor does she

ignore the world around us. The electricity industry is changing very rapidly around us and we're in danger of being left behind. Instead she says, "It's important to create a long-term vision to address the global competitiveness of energy production, transmission and sales," and for that she deserves to be commended, not mocked.

The member for Renfrew North spoke of the public interest. In my view, the public interest is safe, reliable supply of energy at lower rates. Do we just stick our head in the sand and say since 1914 HEPSCO has run Hydro in this province and therefore that's the way it's always been historically, and that's the way it should remain; or do we look at other options and say we're bringing competition into the sector, maybe bringing some private equity into the sector? Will that lower rates and let us keep our safe supply and reliability? If so, we owe it to our constituents, we owe it to our businesses, we owe it to the folks who have those hydro bills every month to look into these different options.

Niagara Falls over the years not only has an historic place in the history of Hydro, but Niagara Falls businesses have an historic place. Several abrasive plants are in Niagara Falls. They've been there from the beginning, in the early 1900s, because they could get cheap power. Their future depends on the continued availability of cheap power in Ontario.

From 1990-94, however, with the CPI increasing on average 2% a year, electricity rates in this province increased more than 40%. That's inefficient and that's dangerous for our businesses and that's dangerous for people in my riding and throughout Ontario for their livelihoods.

If we look at the 1995 average industrial electricity rates measured in US cents per kilowatt-hour, we see Manitoba at 2.5 cents, Missouri at 2.7, Quebec 3.1, Maryland 3.6, Virginia 3.6, Kentucky 3.7, and on and on. Ontario Hydro's at 4.3 cents. We have to look at the system and we have to decide how we make our rates competitive again with the rest of the world.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Maves: The world around us is not going to stand still. They're moving to increase competition —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please.

Mr Maves: — and they're doing it better than we're doing it. So I commend the member for Bruce for recognizing that we still have problems, for recognizing that we have to look at different options, and definitely competition is needed, perhaps private equity is needed, but congratulations to the member for Bruce. I'll support your resolution. You're right on for the need for competition and a competitive strategy for us in the future for Hydro.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Seeing none, the mover of the motion has two minutes to sum up. You can take this time too actually.

Mrs Fisher: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues the members for Ottawa-Rideau, Niagara Falls and Durham East for their contributions today, and those for Renfrew North and from Algoma. I think it's important to reiterate at this point that where Ontario Hydro is involved the status quo is not an option.

I can assure you, Mr Wildman, that I am working for the people of Bruce. I am amazed that you, as the past NDP energy and environment minister, could suggest differently. You had the opportunity to help and you failed.

He cut 10,000 workers. He shut down unit 2. He lost the support of our PW workers, and he still hasn't learned the difference between restructuring and privatization. It was myself and other community leaders who begged him to listen and to help. What did we get? Closed doors. One of the major reasons I am an elected member today is that at least I have the courage to address the issue and assist through the necessary restructuring.

As I have said, there are a number of factors increasing the pressure on Ontario Hydro to restructure. These include the open access and competition initiatives being taken by the United States, the converging of natural gas and other electricity investment interests, the aggregation of smaller US electricity units and the rapid advancement of technology.

This government has a responsibility to attract investment, create jobs and ensure that Ontario can compete globally in the face of economic and technological change by providing accessible electricity at affordable prices. We must restructure Ontario Hydro to make it competitive and a leader in the international market. I firmly believe that Ontario Hydro, and particularly our nuclear assets, can achieve excellence once again, and I look forward to participating in that process.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We will deal first with Mr Kormos's private member's resolution 45. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, they will please rise.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

ONTARIO HYDRO

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We'll deal next with ballot item 46, standing in the name of Mrs Fisher. If any members are opposed to a vote on this, they will please rise.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. A five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We will now vote on Mr Kormos's private member's resolution, ballot item number 45. May I remind the members that before we move to the second ballot, I will cause the doors to open for 30 seconds so members can come and go.

All those in favour of Mr Kormos's motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, Elinor	Kormos, Peter	Silipo, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Wildman, Bud
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Pettit, Trevor
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Preston, Peter
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Bassett, Isabel	Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Ron	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Danford, Harry	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.
Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 14, the nays are 47.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

ONTARIO HYDRO

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We will now deal with Mrs Fisher's motion, ballot item number 46.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Preston, Peter
Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ross, Lillian
Bassett, Isabel	Hardeman, Ernie	Shea, Derwyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Sheehan, Frank
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Skarica, Toni
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, Ron	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Doyle, Ed	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fisher, Barbara	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.
Froese, Tom	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Galt, Doug	Pettit, Trevor	

The Acting Speaker: All members opposed to the resolution will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Silipo, Tony
Caplan, Elinor	Kwinter, Monte	Wildman, Bud
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 16.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being after 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1330.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to take this opportunity to deal with a couple of issues that were left on the table from yesterday, particularly during members' statements. I'd appreciate the attendance of the House for a moment, the member for Etobicoke-Humber.

There were some concerns with respect to parliamentary language, and the member for Dovercourt mentioned in his comments on a point of order that he was looking for some clarification about what is in order and what is not in order in this Legislature.

It seems to me that's a fair request to ask of the Speaker but somewhat difficult to fulfil. It depends quite often on how words are used, what kind of words are used, in what context and the direction of those contexts. Rarely, if ever, is a word completely out of order. It's very often that you can use a certain word in some context that wouldn't be ruled out of order one way and then in the next line could possibly be ruled out of order by a Speaker and in the third line guarantee you that it in fact would be ruled out of order.

Let me directly deal with the complaint of the member for Oriole yesterday with respect to comments that she made in her statement. Her position at the time was, and I know a number of members stood on points of order to address her issue, that she wasn't suggesting that a certain person in the Legislature was a racist, she was saying the remarks they made were racist.

The difficulty that I have as Speaker is that ultimately you could substitute any word for "racist" and simply allow any word to be used in this House if you felt that "remarks" was the caveat that got you theoretically off the hook. In effect, "lie" is a word that we will not use in this place and I'm sure everyone will agree is not tolerated, but if the suggestion is made, that if you say, "Your comments are a lie," "Your answers were a lie," "Your remarks are a lie," that can't possibly let the member off the hook from the actual charge that they're making.

It seems fairly clear to me on that point of order that we, or I specifically, have to make a ruling that is acceptable in my opinion for decorum in this House. Having said that, I reviewed the Hansard from yesterday and I would stand by the decision that I made. You can't simply insert the word "remark" or "comment" and be given carte blanche to make any comment you want.

To move on, the member for Dovercourt suggested in his comments, and testing me — and at the time I decided I would review Hansard and report back to the House today to determine whether or not his remarks were in order. Having reviewed them, it seems fairly clear to me, and I think probably to the majority of this House if you review it, that they were not in order. The fact of the matter is, you can't come into this place — as they said in Erskine May, page 382, "A member is not allowed to use unparliamentary words by the device of putting them in somebody else's mouth." So in essence the member cannot come in here and suggest, "My constituents think you are a racist," or any word you want to put in there. You can't simply, by the device of putting the words in someone else's mouth, make yourself in order if you couldn't directly make the charge yourself.

I will give notice to the House that I didn't rule the member for Dovercourt out of order yesterday. I've taken the time to review the issues before us and I would suggest in future, if anyone attempts to use that device to put their words or other words into someone else's mouth, you will be ruled out of order in future.

I'd just like to put those on the record. I want to say in conclusion that it happened during our period of what we call members' statements. I would remind members that Mr Speaker Edighoffer spoke to the standing orders and members' statements a number of years ago actually and his comments during that were:

"I have paid particular attention to the new procedure during members' and ministers' statements, and I feel that in future we might run into a difficulty that has occurred in the House of Commons. I know the guidelines for members' statements there state that no statement should be used in any way as a personal attack on another member. Because we have no specific guidelines, it is left to the Speaker. I hope that in future, members' and ministers' statements will be used for the regular purpose and not in any way for personal attacks. I ask all members to continue to be honourable members."

Clearly, Speaker Edighoffer foresaw this situation. I understand that we have evolved for members' statements, but with all due respect to people in this House and the members of this House, considering the rulings I made yesterday, considering the background checks I've made on those rulings, I think all members would be better served if they abided by those particular rulings, abided by those particular decisions.

In conclusion, you must be forewarned that if you can't make the charge directly, you cannot make the charge indirectly. That's how this Legislature in fact will continue to work.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: On your comments, I don't know if you're entertaining this or if you're going to make me sit

down, but as I always say, with all due respect — we all know what that means — you're going to sanitize this House to an extent that it's going to become sterile if these options are removed.

I will trust your good judgement. I appreciate that you're saying, as I hear it: You will make a judgement using these general parameters but you'll make individual judgements, which I think is wise because not every case is going to be the same. That's very fair. I differentiate, as I said yesterday, between saying that a person's statement is, for instance, stupid or the person is stupid. They're two different things, because a lot of very clever, excellent people can make a stupid statement. It doesn't mean the person is stupid.

The second thing I'm worried about is your saying, "You cannot personally attack another member." I would say that is wise as well, that there not be a direct attack. However, there are things other members say that members wish to call to the attention of the House in a member's statement, and I hope you would not be too confining as long as it is not a direct personal attack on that person.

The Speaker: The points you make are very valid, and I understand the arguments you make with respect to using the word "stupid" and so on and so forth. As I said at the beginning, and I want to be clear to the member for St Catharines and the House, no word exclusively can be unparliamentary. A word can be used at any time in acceptable parliamentary language. Again, it's up to the Speaker to determine the context of how the word is used and whether or not it's properly put before the Legislature.

As far as members' statements are concerned, I agree. I think it again has to be up to the Speaker, and a little decorum and parliamentary procedure is applied to that as well.

Finally, as I said yesterday, it gets to the point of splitting hairs with respect to the term "racist," whether it's putting the word in your mouth or putting it in someone else's mouth or saying the remarks were. I want to be very clear to the member for St Catharines: That's a decision the Speaker has to make. I made that decision yesterday and I stand by that decision today. I've taken into consideration your comments. I think they're appropriate and applicable in a lot of instances. Again I say no word is unparliamentary; it depends how that word is used.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: If I could comment on your remarks and on your ruling, you make the point, and I think it is a fair comment, that we do not attack another individual. But I believe that as members of this Legislature we have an obligation, when members of this Legislature act in a way that promotes sexism or racism or those isms or things that we feel so strongly and passionately about here, to stand in this House and speak out against those actions. That is not a personal attack on the individual. It is an attack on what they have said and it is raising the consciousness of those who are listening to the fact that it is not only inappropriate but the kind of behaviour which cannot be tolerated in our society.

While I hear your ruling, I would take issue once again with the ruling you made. I don't agree in any way that I attacked the Premier personally. I did not say "he was" or "he is." I specifically quoted something he said and classified that using the only terminology I felt there was to classify it. For that I make no apologies. But I say to you, Mr Speaker, that members of this Legislature, I believe, in making a statement before this House must be free to quote, in quotations, something which another member has said and label it appropriately. If your ruling is that this is unparliamentary, so be it.

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The Speaker: Then, ultimately, I say to the member for Oriole, we agree. I have to be left with the opportunity to make decisions which are parliamentary and unparliamentary and, again, your decision is whether to withdraw or not. That's exactly how the place is supposed to work.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if I could have some clarification from you around the comments that you made about the member for Dovercourt, who said that he had heard from his constituents a certain thing and that it was not appropriate. I wonder if you could explain to me whether or not, if something appears in the press or if we receive a letter that is someone else saying something, that is appropriate. It seems very difficult to me to understand why a verbal communication from a constituent could not be talked about. But I hardly think, and I didn't get a sense from you, that you would have been trying to prevent people from actually dealing with something that was in the public domain that in fact was attributable to a particular individual.

The Speaker: I don't want to go too far into this because, as I said, it's very difficult because specific circumstances are the only way you can work it out; hypothetically, it's very difficult. I say to the House, briefly, I can only refer you to what the member for Dovercourt said. I can only suggest to the member for London Centre that you cannot, as I read earlier, by device say something that you couldn't say otherwise. So, whether it's in the newspaper, whether a constituent has said it to you or not, if you can't level the charge, you can't get around it by saying, "My sister, my brother, my constituent said you are such-and-such." That is in fact the ruling.

I will read the 21st edition of Erskine May just briefly again. Some new members are here. Erskine May, 21st edition, page 382, "A member is not allowed to use unparliamentary words by the device of putting them in somebody else's mouth." It's very clear.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): What if it's not in somebody else's mouth?

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, it's very clear, and the ruling has been made in the past.

Mr Silipo: Erskine May doesn't run this Legislature; you're supposed to.

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: Don't rely on textbooks; rely on your good sense.

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, I am relying on my good sense.

Mr Silipo: Well, it isn't showing.

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, come to order. I took a great deal of time and a lot of effort. I read the context of what you said yesterday. I was very clear earlier in my statement. You cannot say indirectly what you can't say directly.

Mr Silipo: Then how the hell am I supposed to represent my constituents?

The Speaker: The member for Dovercourt, come to order. It's, again, my job to maintain parliamentary procedure, parliamentary debate, and allow you the opportunity of speaking your mind, but you cannot say, as I said earlier, something indirectly that you can't say directly. Thereby, you cannot, by device, put words in someone else's mouth that would not be properly before this place out of your own.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Some of the rest of us have read Erskine May as well. If I remember correctly, one of the other points that is made in several places in Erskine May is that the privilege to say in this House things which might lead to litigation outside this House is here to further free speech and further free debate.

I just want to be sure of what you're saying here. If someone very clearly takes someone's remarks as perhaps indicating a racist attitude or in the context creating a racist impact, why would we be foreclosed from bringing that to the attention of this House? It seems to me you've got to walk a very fine line here, a very fine line, because the last thing we would want to protect in this House is someone's capacity to say racist things, to promote racist attitudes and then not be called to question in this Legislature.

The Speaker: To the leader of the third party: If in this place anyone was speaking as you said they would be speaking, I would give my undertaking, if not a guarantee, to the members of the third party and the opposition and the government that that person would be called to order immediately and asked in fact to withdraw.

The argument that you make, I say to the leader of the third party, is that you bring to this place statements that are made outside the parameters of this House.

Mr Hampton: That is our job.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): It's a description of behaviour.

The Speaker: Let me finish. It cannot be possible for a Speaker to follow 130 members around and go through every written and spoken word each member makes and then be asked to rule on whether or not that specific statement is racist, sexist, on and on and on.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Let me finish, please. It is my job to maintain order and decorum in this chamber. In this chamber, anyone who would make those comments would be called to order and asked to withdraw. There would be absolutely no need for a member opposite to make that request.

I say to the leader of the third party that what I am managing is the control of the chamber, of this place. Anything that happens external to this place will happen, but I must be kept informed in this House and make

decisions and rulings based on actions that take place in this Legislature.

Okay, finally now, a final point of order.

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do not disagree with your attempts to maintain order and decorum in this House. That's what we elected you for and that's what we want you to do. But there are some important principles here. One is the principle of free speech, and I would say to you that if it comes to a contest between free speech and something else, you ought to err, you ought to look in each case towards erring in favour of free speech, because that is the fundamental this place is based upon.

Secondly, there are some other things that enter into this. The reality is that someone, in making a comment outside this House, may not in their own mind necessarily intend a racist impact or may not intend that those people who are subject of the remarks would perceive them that way, but it's well settled in our law now, in the law of this land, that it is not necessarily what someone intends, it is what the victim perceives. I would say to you that you must use that in your measurement as well, that it's not acceptable for someone to make a remark oblivious to what people who may be the receptors of that remark may perceive. That's just not acceptable. Someone cannot make insensitive and potentially racist remarks outside this House and then come in this House and ask you to protect them.

The Speaker: With due respect to the leader of the third party, I want to move on and I think everyone has had a full opportunity to make their points of order. I appreciate what the member is saying. If it came to a choice between a simple decision of opportunity and free speech etc, I believe that I in my history in this place would err on behalf of free speech, if that is the point you're trying to make. I think what I need to tell you is that it's my job to maintain order and decorum in the chamber, it's my job to rule spoken words in and out of order in the chamber.

Mr Hampton: It's also your job to ensure free debate and free speech.

The Speaker: And it's my job to allow free debate and free speech. I don't believe I've not allowed that debate and free speech to take place. In opinions of many members of this Legislature there are different views on a lot of the things that you just said. It is my job to try and maintain decorum and order and allow free speech. I don't believe that with yesterday's decision I limited free speech.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): To the Minister of Transportation: I simply want to report a growing level of anger and frustration on the part of thousands of my constituents in the Upper Ottawa Valley about the current state of Trans-Canada Highway 17 between the villages of Petawawa and Chalk River. As we speak, it's a mess. It is a potholed, washboarded,

stone-infested mess, and people have lost all of their patience. They're beyond frustration; they're angry. Thousands of these people commute daily to two of the largest employers in the region — Atomic Energy of Canada at Chalk River and Canadian Forces Base Petawawa.

1350

These people, my constituents, not to mention scores of others, thousands of others, who travel the Trans-Canada through that part of eastern Ontario, all of these motorists wonder why a highway that was supposed to have been finished — the pavement was supposed to be completed today, the end of October, or before the snow flies. Environment Canada tells us that we are going to have a very substantial blanket of snow across east-central Ontario before today is out. People want to know, why can't this road be finished? Will you commit to completing this project at the earliest opportunity and will you ensure that all of those people who've incurred damage, broken windshields and flat tires are going to have ready redress —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Statements, third party.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to the hundreds and thousands of workers and worker representatives across Ontario who fought to save the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers from the slash-and-burn policies of this government. Specifically, in my own home town of Hamilton and in my riding of Hamilton Centre, the very first occupational health clinic for Ontario workers was established, and it was in Hamilton where Local 1005 led the fight to save that clinic.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of the president of Local 1005 of the United Steelworkers of America, John Martin, and the health and safety plant chair, John Balloch. They released from the local Bob Kilpatrick and Armin Laufs, who worked full-time lobbying the MPPs in our area, all of the city and regional councillors, the chamber of commerce, workplace health and safety agencies, McMaster University, Mohawk College, medical experts and religious groups. They blanketed our community, as I know workers did in Sudbury, in Windsor and here in Toronto.

It was as a result of those efforts that those clinics were saved; it had nothing to do with the generosity of this government. In fact, those clinics should never have been on the chopping block in the first place. They were there because it's part of this government's agenda to attack the rights workers have under the laws of occupational health and safety. Thank God those activists are out there fighting this agenda and giving workers a fighting chance to save their lives.

MARYANNE SHOLDRA

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It is with great pride that I rise to address the House today. Maryanne Sholdra of Oshawa has been volunteering her time and service in Oshawa and in the region of Durham for over 40 years.

For Ms Sholdra, volunteering to help others has been a way of life.

Starting with her volunteering with minor community groups and youth groups, while she attended high school, Ms Sholdra expanded her volunteer activities to include such diverse groups as Oshawa Housing, the Oshawa Folk Arts Council and the Durham Symphony Orchestra.

In the spirit of volunteers being the backbone of Canadian society, Maryanne Sholdra devotes time to three Durham food banks and canvasses for the March of Dimes, the Kidney Foundation and cancer society. In the past, she has served on volunteer boards such as Information Oshawa, Oshawa Senior Citizens and the Oshawa General Hospital board of governors.

Perhaps one of Maryanne Sholdra's most challenging volunteer projects was her work as co-founder of the Citizens for a Cancer Centre in Oshawa. She collected thousands of signatures for petitions and thousands of letters of support in her tenacious efforts leading to the Durham Cancer Centre at the Oshawa General Hospital.

Ms Sholdra has also served as a councillor, both regionally and locally. Her long-term commitment to the betterment of her community is an inspiration to those who know her and make her a model for others to follow.

On October 8, Maryanne Sholdra's contribution to Oshawa, Durham region and the province was recognized when she was awarded the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. Maryanne and team, keep up the great work.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The Harris government continues to lead the province into the dark and murky waters of video lottery terminals as it pushes its legislation allowing electronic slot machines in every bar and every restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario. These slot machines, the most alluring and addictive form of gambling, are designed to prey upon the most vulnerable, desperate people in our society and are bound to cause a myriad of social problems.

This unwise new venture of the PC government has earned Mike Harris the following comment from the newsletter of the national gaming industry: "For a politician who wanted to end gaming in Ontario with the consent of the voters, Harris has quickly become the highest rolling, pro-gaming chief executive in North America since the legendary Edwin Edwards, the former governor of the state of Louisiana."

I recommend that members read a series of articles on gambling in the Minnesota Star Tribune entitled "Dead Broke," how gamblers are killing themselves, bankrupting their families and costing Minnesota millions. Excellent article it is.

Here are some of the growing list of municipalities opposed to VLTs in bars and restaurants in every neighbourhood: Kingsville, Norfolk, Montague, Bothwell, Euphrasia, Culross, Tweed, Kincardine, Nairn, Belmont, Exeter, Fredericksburgh, Lanark, Mount Forest, North York, Durham, Euphemia, Merrickville, Glamorgan, Harrow, Dymond, Amabel, Madoc, Thessalon, Timmins, Clarence —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

HIGHWAY 11

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I'd like to direct my statement today to the Minister of Transportation, Mr Palladini, and also the northern highways minister, Chris Hodgson.

On behalf of the citizens of Smooth Rock Falls and Mayor Fred Poulin, I am asking you to reconsider your decision to remove the passing lane from the reconstruction plans for Highway 11 between Fauquier and Smooth Rock Falls. With winter just around the corner, safety is a growing concern, and because 83% of the traffic in the Cochrane district involves transports, such as the increasing number of school buses, ambulances transferring to local hospitals and holiday travellers, this makes the Highway 11 corridor a prime target for accidents and fatalities. The cancellation of the passing lanes construction will jeopardize the safety of the people of Cochrane North.

The previous government recognized the need to add these passing lanes. Why can't you? Is this because of the irresponsible tax cut your government is giving away to the rich? I can't stress enough how important it is for northerners to feel safe on their roads, and now the safety of our citizens is becoming compromised with your government's cutbacks. I'm urging the government to reconsider its decision for the people of Cochrane North. It is a question of life or death. Make these highways safe in northern Ontario, which, as the Liberal member mentioned, are full of potholes and unsafe to drive. Last winter we spent innumerable days with the snowplows not going out, the sanding trucks not going out. It's a disgrace to see what you've done with the highways in northern Ontario.

PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I recently attended the Industry Education Council's annual break-fast meeting in Hamilton. Two IEC members, Jim O'Connor and Richard Allen, have co-authored a resource guide entitled *How to Engage Your Community in Partnerships in Education*.

The guide is grounded in the Canadian experience. Face-to-face consultations with different groups across Canada were conducted. As co-author Jim O'Connor stated, "The guide is meant to address the real needs of partnership practitioners working in real communities." The book is a practical, easy to understand guide which explains everything, including how to establish a planning team, recruiting volunteers, raising funds and evaluating programs.

This guide goes one step further than most books about educational partnerships because it not only looks at what schools and their partners can accomplish, it also explains how to accomplish their goals. Communities across Canada often look to Hamilton for assistance on how to establish effective education partnerships, and once again Hamiltonians have led the way and responded with the publication of this very important resource guide for educators and employers.

My congratulations to Richard Allen and Jim O'Connor for their hard work in producing this resource guide and for their gift to the students of Canada.

HALLOWEEN

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Tonight is Halloween and like every night since Mike Harris was elected, it promises to be a very scary night. People across Ontario are scared, and indeed they should be.

Tonight the Minister of Education will be hitting the streets dressed as the Joker. After all, he doesn't care what's happening in the classroom and has never listened to anything the teachers are saying.

Al Leach will be dressing as the Big Bad Wolf. He plans on huffing and puffing and blowing our municipalities down.

Bob Runciman is trying something different this year. He has hung up the Mad Dog costume and will be instead dressed as a pussycat, oblivious to everything around him.

Ernie Eves is dressing as a lumberjack. It's the only costume he could wear without his axe looking out of place.

Unfortunately, though, Jim Wilson won't be going out this year. He is too busy closing hospitals and laying off nurses and, believe me, that is scary enough.

But of course the scariest costume once again this year will be the one Mike Harris is wearing. The Premier will be dressing as himself. No costume is needed. If you're a senior, if you are sick, if you're disabled or poor, the thing that scares you the most, tonight and every other night, continues to be Mike Harris.

1400

PROVISION OF WATER SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This government is radically changing the face of Ontario in secret behind closed doors. They plan on privatizing our water without any public process.

I'd like to draw the minister's attention to what happened in the United Kingdom when the Tories there sold off the publicly owned water utility, as the Harris government is planning to do here.

Competition didn't provide rate relief. Rates have increased faster than inflation and wages. There have been some increases of 400% to 500% since 1989. The 10 private water companies have a combined profit of over \$2 billion annually. Sixty per cent of consumers' bills go directly into the company's profits, only the remaining 40% going to infrastructure and environmental concerns.

Water poverty is an increasing phenomenon with consumers finding themselves in debt to private water authorities. Some municipalities have a computerized metering system which if you haven't paid your bill automatically cuts off your total water supply. No threshold. There are poor children in the United Kingdom going without water.

The inefficiency of this profit-based system has led to water shortages. On top of that, there have been 250 prosecutions in the last six years on environmental —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Riverdale.

BLOCK PARENT PROGRAM

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): This is National Community Safety and Crime Prevention Week, and I believe there are few issues closer to people's hearts than the safety of our children. For 20 years the Scarborough Block Parent program has created a safer environment for children and others by creating awareness of safe block parent homes in our community. There are currently 2,000 homes in Scarborough where youngsters who fear for their safety or need help can go knowing a good friend is only a doorbell away.

The Scarborough program, with the support of city council, the board of education and local businesses and shopping malls, has grown into one of the five largest block parent programs in Canada. I might add, Scarborough instituted the very first apartment block parent program in Canada to assist residents, particularly seniors who need the help of a friend. The Scarborough apartment program has since expanded to dozens of other communities right across the country.

Community safety can only be achieved when individual citizens take an active role. When people in Scarborough and elsewhere are willing to open their doors to our young people everybody benefits.

I congratulate all Scarborough block parents and director Maureen Keeping for the great job they have done over the past 20 years. I urge everyone who cares about the safety of our kids to apply to become a block parent, to put that famous red sign in your front window saying, "I want to make a difference."

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is to put you on notice that we've requested and we will be requesting an emergency debate today. It's our belief that physicians have turned down the government's offer, which means that some communities in Ontario may start facing the loss of some physician services tomorrow. So we will be asking the government members for an emergency debate on the whole situation concerning physicians in the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, leader of the third party. You understand you'll have to seek unanimous consent.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Our government is committed to promoting the safety and security of Ontarians by taking a strong stand on crime. We're working with the police, concerned taxpayers and representatives of community safety organizations to craft a new vision for public safety in Ontario.

I'm pleased to report that we have achieved many of our goals in the first 16 months. We are well under way to realizing our new vision for justice and community safety in Ontario. Our new vision includes protecting our communities, safeguarding victims' rights, promoting

crime prevention and increasing public confidence in our criminal justice system.

November is Domestic Assault Prevention Month and next week is Crime Prevention Week in Ontario. Police services have a full program of events planned for their communities, and I'm pleased to say the Ministry of the Solicitor General has assisted them in their efforts. The Attorney General and I will use this month to demonstrate our continuing commitment to our vision for justice and community safety.

We are protecting our communities by moving quickly to reform parole in Ontario. Criminals who are a threat to public safety will be kept behind bars and denied parole. For the first time ever, we are denying more parole applications than we grant. Ontario Board of Parole members are now better trained and have better tools to make good release decisions.

We are protecting our communities by reinvesting \$5.2 million this year to make the DNA lab at the Centre of Forensic Sciences among the best in North America. Homicide investigators and criminal profilers will get the answers they need to solve crimes quickly. This investment will help identify and convict predators.

We are protecting our communities by doubling our funding for police RIDE spot checks to \$1.2 million this year. Our goal is to take drunk drivers off the road and to save lives. As the Attorney General will later tell you, our message is clear: Don't drink and drive in Ontario.

Further, to keep our communities safe, we will introduce a community safety bill which will give the police the tools they need to release information about high-risk offenders. The public has a right to know where and when a dangerous offender will be released from jail. Victims will also be able to find out when offenders are released from jail or paroled with the introduction of the first phase of the victim notification system early in the new year.

I'm proud to be a member of a government that has introduced a Victims' Bill of Rights. We are following through on our commitment to assist victims of crime so they are given the support and respect they deserve and to ensure they are not made to suffer a second time at the hands of an insensitive justice system.

This government has committed \$1.92 million to expand the victim crisis assistance and referral service. This service will expand the current four locations to 20 sites across Ontario over two years. Trained volunteers will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to attend crime and accident scenes to assist victims, freeing up police officers for other front-line duties.

Although this is a positive first step, we are doing more to assist victims of crime. This November, during Domestic Assault Prevention Month, we will be announcing \$500,000 in project funding to some 20 community organizations which assist victims of crime. This year's community victims' initiative program, part of the \$10.2-million victims' justice fund, will focus on community projects which prevent violence against women.

Even with these two new initiatives and others the Attorney General will tell you about, this government still needs to make sure victims find the help they need when they need it. We will soon be unveiling a first for

Ontario, an automated information and referral service. This telephone information service will offer callers general information about the criminal justice system and how it works. It will also put the caller in touch with someone who can explain what victims' services are available in the caller's home community.

This government is promoting crime prevention by hitting criminals where it hurts, in their pocketbook. Police will seize and this government will liquidate the assets of criminals using the proceeds-of-crime initiative. We will plow the money back into community crime prevention and law enforcement initiatives.

We are promoting crime prevention by placing high-risk and repeat young offenders into a strict discipline program. This government knows they need a large dose of discipline, motivation and personal responsibility for their actions so that they don't grow up to become career criminals at everyone's expense.

1410

We all have a right to feel safe in our homes and communities. Achieving that sense of security takes more than a local police force; it takes a total community effort. Each and every individual has a role to play in building safer communities. That's why this government is also investing \$2 million enabling communities to solve local crime problems with local solutions. Ontario needs a strong and effective criminal justice system, one which enjoys the confidence of all law-abiding people.

Ontarians know that in the age of computers and high technology, our justice system can be faster, smarter and more efficient. Our justice system is buried in paperwork. This government is linking all aspects of the justice system electronically so that police, crown attorneys, judges and jailers can, for the first time ever, share information by computer. Police officers and others will be released from the burden of paperwork to concentrate on front-line duties and help to make our justice system more effective.

Each step forward helps make our homes, streets and communities safer places to live and work. Each step contributes to restoring Ontario's social and economic health.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I would like to build on my colleague's comments and outline the steps that the Ministry of the Attorney General is taking to meet the needs of Ontarians and ensure the safety of our communities. We know that safe communities attract investment, and that leads to more jobs.

The people of Ontario have told us that they live in fear of rising violent crime. The public deserves safe communities. Ontarians shouldn't have to worry about the safety of their families and homes. As a government, we are committed to alleviating their concerns and making our communities safer. That is why we have moved quickly to create and implement a number of initiatives and programs that support our goals.

Within the Ministry of the Attorney General, we are protecting our communities by calling for young offenders to be more accountable for their actions. The government has consistently asked for significant changes to the Young Offenders Act. The act is a dismal failure. It

doesn't protect the public, doesn't punish the guilty and doesn't deter crime. It must be changed.

We believe that anyone aged 16 or older should be tried in adult court. We believe the names of youth convicted of serious violent offences should be made public in the interest of community safety. We believe the federal government should allow prosecutions in some cases where the offender is under the age of 12. We believe that victims should be allowed to seek civil damages from young offenders or their parents, who should be responsible and accountable for their children. We do not believe that youth should have access to free legal services if their parents can afford to pay. We will continue to exert pressure on federal Justice Minister Allan Rock and Solicitor General Herb Gray on behalf of the people of Ontario.

At the same time, we must find better ways to deal with youth crime in our schools, communities and the justice system. I will continue to review parental responsibility legislation and expand my discussions to date with those in the education sector to try to find solutions to youth crime.

We are protecting our communities by spending \$7 million on the investment strategy, a set of initiatives designed to improve the way we prosecute cases. This program ensures that we can prosecute criminals in a timely manner so charges are not dismissed because of delays.

Later this month I will be going one step further and announcing concrete measures such as blitz teams to tackle case backlogs and ensure that charges proceed more quickly, criminals are punished appropriately and our streets remain safe.

We are protecting communities by catching criminals quickly and getting them off the streets. We will introduce new ways that search warrants can be issued. We want police officers to have ready and easy access to justices of the peace when they need a search warrant to carry out a criminal investigation. I hope to soon announce new measures that provide police officers with timely access to search warrants at all hours.

We are protecting our communities by getting drunk drivers off our streets immediately through administrative driver's licence suspension. Under the government's plan, drunk drivers will have their licences suspended on the spot for 90 days by the registrar of motor vehicles if their blood alcohol concentration is higher than the legal limit.

We are safeguarding victims' rights by establishing two dedicated courts to deal exclusively with wife assault in the Toronto area. Victims, crown attorneys and judges have told us that they believe specialized courts will allow us to better prosecute wife assault cases and address the problems created by repeat offenders. Such courts will focus on the needs of victims and require that perpetrators take full criminal responsibility for their assaults. I will be announcing the details of this plan in the very near future.

We are safeguarding victims' rights by refocusing the criminal justice system to bring about meaningful change to the way victims are treated. We did this by passing one of the most comprehensive Victims' Bill of Rights in the country to provide victims of crime with the support

and respect they deserve in Ontario's criminal justice system.

Enshrining the victims' justice fund so that all moneys from the victim fine surcharge are used exclusively for victims' services is something we're very proud of. To date, we have allocated \$10.2 million to a variety of victims' services, some of which my colleague has already outlined.

At the Ministry of the Attorney General we are doubling the victim/witness assistance program from 13 to 26 sites. This program walks victims and witnesses of crime, 90% of whom are women and children, through the court process. It gives victims and witnesses the information and support they need to avoid being re-traumatized when they appear in court.

We are improving the quality of justice for Ontarians by investing more than \$90 million to construct new or consolidated court facilities where they are most needed. This investment will provide faster, more affordable and accessible courts for the public.

We are improving the quality of justice for Ontarians by making better use of technology so that all parts of the justice system become integrated.

We are creating an environment for safe communities where people feel secure in their homes and neighbourhoods, and where there is respect for people and property. Ordinary citizens want that; businesses want that; investors want that. We are taking concrete steps to make Ontario a safer place in which to live, raise children, work and invest. By doing so, we will help to restore jobs, hope and prosperity to this great province.

In the coming weeks, the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services and I will be back before you to provide more details about some of the measures we have highlighted today. I want to remind members of the House that this is only the start. Our commitment to law and order is ongoing.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to respond to the ministers' statements and to say that the government certainly will have our full support for any measures that provide for a safer and more secure community. I'll assure the government of that and I'll assure the public of that: Our party is absolutely committed to doing whatever it can that sensibly, logically and realistically provides for safer communities.

I want to provide some overview comments, though, on the announcement. The first the public should be aware of is that the proof is often in the resources the government's prepared to allocate. I would say that the public should be aware that the government has decided to dramatically cut back the Attorney General's budget; I believe it's \$200 million less than it was three years ago. The Solicitor General's budget is lower than it was last year. We are awaiting the Minister of Finance's announcement in the next three or four weeks on resources and will be watching that very carefully.

Certainly for municipalities that have the responsibility for maintaining our police organizations, the government has decided to cut its level of support by 50%. You've decided that the municipalities can get by with 50% less money from the province. The public should at least be aware that the announcement today is within that back-

drop. You have decided that the municipalities are going to get 50% less money, less support from the province, and we all know that the largest single item in a municipal budget is our police organization.

1420

The second thing I wanted to say is that the one major issue we've had with our police organizations before the Legislature in the last few weeks has been video lottery terminals, the electronic slot machines. In that particular case, we had specific advice from our senior law officers in this province, from the criminal intelligence unit headed up by one of our senior chiefs in this province and from the Metropolitan Toronto Police. Both of those major organizations that deal with major crime told the government, "You are making a big mistake in terms of law and order in this province in approving these video lottery terminals," so it is ironic that the day when you are introducing this is exactly the same time you are asking the Legislature to pass a bill that our senior law enforcement officers say is wrong and will lead to more organized crime in Ontario.

The third thing I wanted to say is that the public expects to have proposals before us, and proposals that are executed with competence. I would say the experience we in the Legislature have had in the last few weeks with both of the ministers who have just talked, one on the family support plan — and in that particular case it is a mess, and a mess as a result of a government action. They decided they would change it. You've got much the same language around the use of new technology and what not, and you've created an enormous mess so that mainly women in this province have been suffering for month after month as a result of incompetence.

With regard to the Solicitor General we've had two or three examples: Bluewater and Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. I gather we have a large number of our young offenders in adult institutions; virtually against the law for them to be there. Ipperwash certainly is an area, in my judgement, of incompetent handling.

As we look at the proposals today, it is within the backdrop of, what resources does the government really believe it wants to allocate to safe, secure communities in this province and how competent is it to execute it?

I will say in closing that there are several elements in these proposals that we are very strongly supportive of, and we certainly will be encouraging the government to move ahead. There are other elements in these proposals, frankly, that we will need to see more detail on. We will need to have a good debate in this Legislature before you get our undivided support, but as an overview, I think the government talks a substantially bigger game than it delivers in these matters.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I share the concern of my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt that this is a smokescreen. This is an effort on the part of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General to divert our attention away from some of the very serious problems we face in this province. It is a technique that goes back to Machiavelli: When things are going wrong, try to find a scapegoat on whom you can blame the problems of your government. Try to hit all those hot buttons. You've learned well from your southern counterparts, the Republicans in the United States, to

use law and order as a mechanism to focus people's attention on your right-wing values and your right-wing behaviour.

Quite frankly, there is much in this announcement that we couldn't possibly disagree with and wouldn't want to, but you spoil an announcement about the good things you have done by scapegoating young offenders, by making the kind of statement that gives permission to correctional officers, gives permission to people in this province, to blame unfortunate young people, most of whom have been abused themselves previous to their encounter with the law and most of whom come out of poverty-stricken backgrounds. You give permission to the people of this province to scapegoat those kids for problems they did not create and problems to which they are reacting.

You know very well that the Minister of Justice in Ottawa has stated clearly there will not be the kind of retrograde changes that you want to make to the Young Offenders Act. That is not appropriate. It does not accord with the rights of the children convention we've signed with the United Nations. It in no way reflects the expertise we have built up in this province around the treatment and the effort to prevent the kind of crime that young offenders commit.

The minister is quite right: His methods will make it difficult for young offenders to grow up continuing in crime, because some don't grow up at all. James Lonnee will not grow up. He in fact was victimized by the very similar kinds of attitudes within the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services' own facility.

Who are the victims of crime who get attention from this government? Well, they talk a very good line. It is good to see an extension of the victim/witness program. It is interesting to see that the money going to that expansion is not nearly what it would have been under the original plan of our government. It is interesting to see that the money out of the victim fund is much less than the money that was taken out of the women's directorate funds that did the same kind of thing around Wife Assault Month and Sexual Assault Month.

This is a smokescreen to try to convince the women and the people of Ontario that you care about the victims of assault when you have taken away the counselling money from second-stage housing facilities, when you have cut the facilities for first-stage housing by 20% and all of those other community supports that women and children need. You have cut financial support through the cuts to welfare for women whose partners refuse to give them that kind of treatment.

The Minister of Community and Social Services decided to get up and be proud of the fact that many women have gone back to abusive partners because they cannot manage to feed their children on social assistance, and her survey showed that is a reality. She may think it's a good thing that people went back home, but I can tell you that those in abusive situations don't.

This is a method this government is using to try to divert our attention, as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said, from the criticisms of the police and the law enforcement people in this province; to try to divert the criticisms of the Chief Justice and other justices of the Divisional Court and the provincial court about the kind of resources that are available to them to deliver

justice; to try to divert our attention from the lack of budget that is there for municipal police forces because of the cutbacks; to try to divert our attention from the fact that the Ontario Provincial Police have lost many officers through attrition who are not going to be replaced; to try to divert our attention from the fact that the family support plan, which is a major protection for people who are being victimized financially by a non-payor of support that's been ordered by the court — these are all efforts to try to blind the people of Ontario to what is really happening as a result of your budget-cutting plans.

It is an effort to try to convince us that you care. The reality is that it is getting harder and harder for people to accept the words when we see the actions as being quite different. It takes much more than words, my friends, it takes actions to really convince us that you're trying to protect our community.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to draw your attention to Hansard, the debates of yesterday, October 30, 1996, page 4929, the remarks of the honourable member for Nipissing, the Premier, in which he said in referring to the member for Cochrane North, "You are shameless in your pursuit of more politicians and big government and more money in your own pocket and less for the people." Then further down, "You are an embarrassment to your constituents and the people of northern Ontario."

Mr Speaker, could you advise members of the House whether it is appropriate for any member in this House to impute motives to the point of suggesting that a member of the assembly is only interested in more money in his own pocket?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I appreciate the point of order from the member for Algoma, but if you don't know, you should know that points of order on statements in this Legislature must be taken up at the time they're made. It's not up to the Speaker of the House the day after to go back and determine whether something was in or out of order. In fact, I was not even in the chair at the time that was said.

I appreciate the fact that the member for Algoma would like to put that on the record, but as Speaker of the House, at this time I can't begin to start ruling on statements that were made yesterday when I wasn't the Speaker.

1430

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you tell me then on what basis you ruled that my statement of yesterday was out of order? You made that ruling today; you did not make that ruling yesterday.

The Speaker: I think, the member for Dovercourt, I said that I didn't rule your —

Mr Silipo: Sorry. I thought you said earlier —

The Speaker: If you let me finish, I did say that I allowed you to finish and that was left in order yesterday and I didn't ask you to withdraw it. I then said I would take the time to review your statements. I came back

today and said that in future, if in fact that is put on the table, I will rule that out of order. I did not rule your statement out of order; I have not asked you to withdraw. So in future reference.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: That's exactly the kind of advice to the House that we are seeking. You gave us a lot of advice today of what sorts of things are parliamentary and unparliamentary, what would be in order, what wouldn't be in order. It seems that in the characterization of those things that are unparliamentary, the Premier's comments of yesterday fit your characterization exactly. We would like to know, just for our own advice for the future, if in fact those comments would be ruled out of order if made in the future.

The Speaker: With respect to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, what I did at the time was I consciously made the decision on the member for Dovercourt to come back and speak to those issues that he spoke to yesterday and I addressed those issues at the time.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The Tories said it's okay.

The Speaker: I would hardly think that's an appropriate comment, to the member for London Centre.

At the time that the member for Dovercourt made those statements, two members had been removed from the House. At that time in the debate —

Ms Lankin: Just tell us in the future this is the way —

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine, if you're going to stand on a point of order, I would suggest that you listen to the response.

So what I was suggesting at the time was that I would review the member for Dovercourt's statement and report back to the Legislature today. I was not in the chair when the Premier was speaking yesterday. I was not in the House when the Premier was speaking yesterday.

Ms Lankin: Simply advise. You are giving us a lot of advice.

The Speaker: Again, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, if you're going to stand on a point of order and ask for clarification, it's easier to understand the clarification if you listen to the clarification.

The point is that I was not in the chair yesterday when the Premier was speaking. I was not in the House. The Speaker made a ruling at that time. It's not up to me to come back the next day and question those rulings. Thank you.

Ms Lankin: No, we would like advice for the future. You gave us a lot of advice earlier.

The Speaker: Again I would caution the member very clearly, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, it wasn't a question of having advice. I was very clear yesterday about telling the member for Dovercourt I would report back. I reported back.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER OF HEALTH

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): My first question is for the Premier. Today our province finds

itself in the midst of another health care crisis presided over and fostered by your Minister of Health. I'm referring of course to the fact that doctors have rejected the deal and that we are facing in this province a massive job action and Ontarians are going to be deprived of essential health care services.

When your government made your infamous Bill 26 law, you gave Jim Wilson total and arbitrary control over Ontario's health care system. Your minister has now clearly shown that he has a reverse healer's touch. He's not curing our health care woes; he's making them worse. The fact is that your minister is not an advocate for health care; he's an advocate for expenditure reductions at the expense of quality health care. Jim Wilson has today created yet another crisis that he cannot solve. He's had a year to ensure that Ontarians will be guaranteed access to doctors' services but he has failed to protect us.

We need a Minister of Health who is committed to our health. This one is not. Will you replace him?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, but thanks very much for a positive suggestion.

Mr McGuinty: I want to bring something to your attention that you should recognize anyway. You should know that your minister has lost our trust and confidence. Doctors don't trust him. Nurses don't trust him. Patients don't trust him. They no longer see Jim Wilson as the defender of our health care system. They see him as its attacker.

His principal initiatives as minister have been to impose user fees for drugs, to cut over \$1 billion from our hospitals, to prompt layoffs of 15,000 nurses and to let loose an unelected hospital closing commission. Today we are witnessing the result of his failure to manage his relationship with our doctors. Premier, 76% of Ontario doctors have rejected this deal that was put before them. This is a clear and unequivocal rejection. The net result is that once again our Minister of Health, in a very real sense, is acting as a threat to health care in Ontario.

Ontarians want and deserve a Minister of Health who will defend health care, not attack it. I ask you again, will you replace this minister?

Hon Mr Harris: This is the first Minister of Health, in my recollection in the last 10 or 11 years, who had such confidence from the OMA that it unanimously agreed with him that the negotiations that were undertaken were fair, were reasonable, were appreciated; the first time that anybody had sat down and meaningfully negotiated with them since the Liberals and the New Democratic Party were in power. On the basis of that and the unanimous recommendation of the OMA, thank you very much, Minister of Health. We agree with you and we are waiting to hear the response of the OMA. Everything that we've heard so far is: "Gosh, this is the first time in 10 years we've had meaningful negotiations. I hope we can keep carrying on with the same Minister of Health."

Mr McGuinty: Maybe the Premier didn't hear me. The fact is that 76% of Ontario doctors, those who practise on the front lines in this province, have rejected this deal. That can hardly be symbolic of a close relationship with your government.

Again, no one trusts or has faith in a Minister of Health who acts as an accountant instead of an advocate

for better health care. This weekend I spoke to a number of doctors and asked them why they couldn't arrive at an agreement with your government regarding their salaries. Each of these doctors made it clear to me that the biggest stumbling block in the way of reaching an agreement was the minister himself.

You see, your Minister of Health has himself become the issue. Ontario doctors could not settle with this minister because, to put it quite simply, they don't trust him. It's time for a new Minister of Health, one who will defend health care, not attack it; one who will negotiate with doctors, not threaten them; and one who will lend comfort to patients, not frighten them. Will you do the right thing and replace Jim Wilson?

Hon Mr Harris: I am happy to answer the question. I realize it comes from a party that last week told us we were giving too much to the doctors. I might say that it's difficult for us to know exactly what the Liberal Party position is. Is it too much? Is it not enough? But if your position with reference to the Minister of Health is, what do doctors think of the Minister of Health, unanimously the Ontario Medical Association has said, "Thank you" to the Minister of Health for showing them respect, something they haven't had for a long time from either the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party — respect for their work, value for their work.

If you're talking about the specifics of current negotiations, I understand today I have a press release from the obstetricians at the Mississauga Hospital. They'd like everyone to know — and that includes you and the leader of the party, if she'd care to listen, and the member for St Catharines, if he'd care to quit interjecting and listen — "We are now accepting new patients for prenatal care. The government has at last begun to address some of the issues that cause us concern and has shown a willingness to negotiate." I would say they're quite happy with the Minister of Health, as am I.

PHYSICIANS' SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Ottawa South): Those few tidbits or trinkets strewn around by this government are hardly going to make up for the ravages caused to this health care system in Ontario. I'd like to continue in this line of questioning with the Premier. I want to talk to you a bit about plan B now, because you've kept the people of Ontario in the dark over this for much too long. Patients have a right to know what you, in the absence of a minister committed to our health, are going to do to protect our health care services. Tell us, what now? Now that Ontario doctors have overwhelmingly rejected your deal, what specific plans do you have to deal with the massive job action planned against your minister?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Health, who has received a ringing endorsement from the OMA, would be happy to answer that.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The Premier is correct in saying that it's difficult to know the Liberal Party's position. I'd repeat that last week they said we were giving far too much to the doctors, that we were giving away the health care system to the doctors of the province. You can't have it both ways. You're not fooling the folks who are watching us back home. I

would say that we have not received any official word from the OMA council. The council is meeting as we speak, and we want to respect the process. Certainly my door is always open to Ontario's doctors. I'm very interested to know what the outcome of today's council meeting will be, and I can assure you we will take whatever comes from the council very seriously.

1440

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to offer a prediction for the benefit of the minister and the Premier, and that is that his deal is going to be rejected. I'm asking, on behalf of the people of this province, what the minister's plans are. All they've heard of so-called contingency plans to date is that you plan to ship women off to the United States to have their babies and to cover the signs along Ontario highways which point to the nearest hospital because there's no one there to care for patients.

What are your plans for expectant mothers across the province who are fearful for their wellbeing and that of their children because they cannot be sure an obstetrician will be available to them throughout their pregnancy? What are your plans for those women in Sudbury and Kenora, for example, for whom going to the United States to deliver their babies is not an option? What are your plans for Ontarians who are frightened and angry that they cannot be sure their emergency wards will be open, because of a shortage of doctors? Who will act on their behalf? Who will save them from the massive withdrawal of services planned right across Ontario?

Hon Mr Wilson: I could go on to read the press release that the Premier started to read, from the obstetricians in Mississauga, which indicates that they're accepting patients. Most of the doctors across the province we've heard from over the last few weeks appreciate the fact that the negotiating teams have been talking and that we've been having serious negotiations.

I would say to all members of the House without hesitation that plan A and plan B and plan C and plan D and plan E are always to ensure quality access to top-quality health care services in this province for the people of this province and to always have my door open to Ontario's doctors and to work with the Ontario Medical Association to solve problems and frustrations and concerns that doctors have had for over 15 years, problems, concerns and frustrations that your party failed to address during its time in office.

Mr McGuinty: I guess we're just going to have to wait for women in Ontario to go into labour within the context of this massive job action before we find out what this government's plans are. We're going to have to wait for someone to be seriously injured and to attend an emergency department to find there's nobody there to help them before we're going to find out what this government's plans are.

This government has mastered the art of creating a crisis. What they haven't figured out yet, though, is how to solve one. The lack of a response illustrates one thing and one thing only: Protecting access to health care is simply not a priority for this government. Will you now just admit that you have failed to protect Ontarians' access to quality health care?

Hon Mr Wilson: The number one priority of this government has been to protect access to health care, and

we've done that, not only by fully preserving the health care budget, not cutting one penny of the budget, but by increasing that budget. I would say in all sincerity to the honourable member that we have done that in the face of all the odds against us from the federal government. Jean Chrétien has cut this province by \$2.1 billion. You're running for leadership in your party, true leadership on behalf of patients and people who need health care in this province. Would you go and talk to the Prime Minister of this country, who happens to belong to the same party as you do —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I ask the member for Yorkview to withdraw that comment.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): What comment? "Ha"? I didn't say that he's misleading the House. Is he attempting to mislead the House, accusing the federal government —

The Speaker: Order. You cannot accuse another member of misleading the House.

Mr Sergio: I'm not accusing the member.

The Speaker: I give you the opportunity to withdraw or not withdraw. That's your —

Mr Sergio: If it pleases you, Mr Speaker, I will withdraw, but my intention does not change.

The Speaker: The member for Yorkview, it's not if it pleases me; it's either withdraw or you don't withdraw.

Mr Sergio: I'll withdraw, but my mind does not change.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Mr Wilson: Simply pointing out a few facts that the Prime Minister himself pointed out in a Toronto Star article on October 27 that said, "Medicare 'Squeeze' Needed." Somehow the members across the road can't seem to admit what the Prime Minister himself admits, that he has cut \$2.1 billion in health and social service transfers to the province of Ontario.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Health. Last week you said that you didn't think the leadership of some of the doctors' groups represented rank and file doctors, and you said that you were confident that doctors would vote for your government's deal. You must be aware by now of the perception that your government's deal has been turned down overwhelmingly. You must be aware of that. You must be informed of the results.

Will you inform the Legislature now of the vote results? Are you still confident that your government's deal will be accepted by doctors?

Hon Mr Wilson: I would remind all members that the Ontario Medical Association representing Ontario's doctors recommended this deal, which was a joint statement, the first step in a negotiation process. They wholeheartedly endorsed it, both negotiating teams did, and they've spent a considerable amount of time and resources recommending it to their membership. So to say that this was in any way a one-sided process certainly doesn't reflect the facts.

I think that for the next couple of hours — and the NDP are always the party to talk about process and the respect of process — we all should respect the process. The council is meeting right now and we've received no official word from that council.

Mr Hampton: It's pretty obvious from the minister's answer. This was the minister who a short time ago was very cocky and assumed that he knew it all with respect to health care, and what we're seeing now is a minister who is not so cocky. We can tell from your response that you know that your government's proposal has been turned down overwhelmingly by physicians.

One day you said you would go back to the negotiation table with physicians, and then the next day you said, "That's it, this is the only deal, take it or leave it." We're left wondering, where are you at now? The specialists have extended their deadline until November 8 before they start withdrawing services, but our understanding is that family physicians across the province are going to begin withdrawing services tomorrow.

I want to ask you, you who have told us all along that you know it all, what are your plans for tomorrow for dealing with the withdrawal of services of a number of family physicians across this province?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, the honourable member is factually incorrect. This was not my government's proposal. It was a negotiated proposal agreed to by both sides. Please admit that much, Mr Hampton.

Second, with respect to the next steps, I'm waiting to hear from the Ontario Medical Association because I respect the process that both parties have entered into.

Mr Hampton: I say again, this is the Minister of Health who was in the press a couple of days ago saying adamantly to physicians, "This is the only deal you're going to get; take it or leave it," and it is apparent to all of us that the physicians of the province are going to leave it.

I want to ask of the minister, this is the health care crisis you created. You were the one who brought in the Bill 26 provisions presuming you could tell physicians where they could practise, how they could practise, when they could practise. You were the Minister of Health who apparently knew it all. What do we do now?

We are going to ask later on this afternoon for an emergency debate on this matter, an emergency debate on the health care crisis you have created. Will you agree to that emergency debate so you can tell us what you're going to do?

Hon Mr Wilson: This member is a member of a party that signed two deals with Ontario's doctors and lived up to almost nothing in those deals. When we came to office, eight of the 12 major issues in your last two agreements with the doctors were before the courts. Several million dollars have been spent in legal fees, money that should be spent on direct patient services. So I don't think you have a licence to get up and criticize the process that this government has entered into jointly with the Ontario Medical Association.

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING (TORONTO)

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It concerns the way your government is going about making decisions. You are making fundamental decisions on how the 2.3 million people of the Metropoli-

tan Toronto area are going to be governed and you're making those decisions behind closed doors and without any public input.

We've looked at you who does what to whom panel and it's interesting. You've got very few Toronto representatives. You've got Steve Lowden, past president of Metro's big business lobby, and you've got Enid Slack, a financial consultant. Then you've got some faceless, nameless, unaccountable bureaucrats. Let me ask you this: Why are you letting bureaucrats and business lobbyists decide the future of Toronto? Why don't you trust people who were elected to municipal councils, people who have been elected mayors of their communities to take part in this discussion? Why are you doing all this behind closed doors, Minister?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd like to say that one of my wiser appointments was giving David Crombie a role in developing ideas for the future of government in Metropolitan Toronto. Guess who said that? Bob Rae, in his latest book, which I understand is almost a bestseller.

There has been considerable consultation. We spent well over a year with the Golden commission; Ernst and Young have developed studies providing information on where we should go with governance in the GTA. There's such a mass of information available to everybody, you should try and get hold of some.

Mr Hampton: This is not about David Crombie. It's the government that created the process here. It's the government that created a process that allows a few business lobbyists to decide the future of Toronto and allows a few financial consultants to decide the business of Toronto, but we don't see here the representatives of any community groups, we don't see the representatives of any social service providers, no labour representation. We don't see anyone being represented here who may want to have a fuller and more complete debate or discussion.

You talk about locally driven municipal restructuring, but what you're doing here is imposing a top-down solution on 2.3 million people, a top-down solution from behind closed doors. That's what you're doing. So Minister, I want to ask you — David Crombie didn't set up this process; you and your government set up this closed-door process — will you commit now to delaying your decision for at least 30 days, as the mayors of the areas have asked for, and will you instruct that the Crombie panel begin to hold their processes in the open, with open public consultation and open public discussion?

Hon Mr Leach: We have had more public consultation on this issue probably than any other issue this government has faced. You may have forgotten all of the public process that took place during the Golden report. You've forgotten about all of the public process and the public meetings that were held by Metropolitan Toronto, held by the city of Toronto on this issue. There have been referendums, there have been all —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: As I said, there has been scads of public involvement in this issue — report after report after report.

Mr Hampton: I just want you to know the credentials of some of the people who are telling the government what to do here. I mentioned Mr Lowden, and these are Mr Lowden's credentials: He gave \$1,000 to the Progressive Conservative Party centrally, he gave \$250 to Isabel Bassett, he gave \$250 to Mr Saunderson and he gave \$200 to Mr Leach. This is who is going to decide the fate of 2.3 million people and how they're going to be governed.

Minister, you'd better get it through your head: If you think you are going to totally re-engineer how people are governed, if you think you're going to totally re-engineer the structure of government for 2.3 million people, you'd better start holding an open process or you're going to find out that things dig in very quickly around here. Are you willing to start now holding an open process for government and to stop listening to your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Leach: I guess a contribution of that amount was probably enough to influence that party, but it certainly isn't enough to influence this one.

Interjections.

Interjection: Can we give him a chance to continue to be witty?

The Speaker: That's what I'm waiting for. Minister.

Hon Mr Leach: The Crombie panel is made up of 15 individuals with a great deal of expertise in municipal affairs, and they're providing advice to this government. We'll accept some of the advice; some of it we probably won't accept. But they are dedicated people who are taking a lot of time and a lot of effort to make sure we get their best advice.

PHYSICIANS' SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I want to return to the Minister of Health, the minister who is responsible for having created this crisis in health care that we face today and the minister whose bullying tactics have made any resolution of it absolutely impossible.

This started just about exactly a year ago when this minister and this government brought in the infamous Bill 26 and tried to ram through their redirections of the health care system, when this Minister of Health arbitrarily gave himself the power to go in and shut down hospitals and then proceeded to gut the budgets of hospitals across this province and jeopardize access to patient care. It started in Bill 26 when this Minister of Health gave himself the power to decide what care patients will get instead of that decision being made by patients with their doctor. It was this Minister of Health who decided in Bill 26 that he had to be able to force physicians to go into communities that need doctors rather than providing positive incentive programs. As if that wasn't enough, it was this Minister of Health who decided to follow all of this with arbitrary clawbacks after having already broken in Bill 26 the deal with the Ontario Medical Association.

1500

You are now back in the chaos you created, Minister, and patients today are at risk. You said this weekend that you would guarantee, in the event of a failed deal, that

patients would have access to health care. How will you keep that guarantee?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member seems to have a very short memory. This all started, as I recall, and I was an assistant here at the time, in 1986, when thousands of doctors were on the front lawn when her government was in office.

I would also remind the honourable member that the recovery of overpayments began under the social contract when the NDP were in office. Prior to that, nobody ever heard of such a thing. We've committed, over the last 16 months, to try and get out of the crazy system of recovering overpayments after the fact.

I'd ask the honourable member to reflect for a moment that history is very clear that doctors have not been happy in this province for a number of years — I'd say it would go back at least 10 to 15 years — and that she should not in any way try and pretend that she has some sort of sainthood degree on this. Her party did a great deal to undermine the professional morale of doctors in this province and to truly treat them with disrespect.

Mrs McLeod: At the moment I don't need to take my memory back much past this past weekend, when the Minister of Health, having negotiated a deal with the Ontario Medical Association, beginning to feel that maybe it was slipping away, felt he had to step in and say: "If you don't vote for my deal, I'm not going back to the negotiating table. There is no way." It's ironic to hear this Premier talk about positive relationships with the physicians of this province and the Ontario Medical Association when his own minister is out trying to bully his way through the deal that he believed was falling apart.

But the issue today is that if this deal fails, as it appears it is going to, patients are at risk. You are the Minister of Health. You've guaranteed patients that you would protect their access to health care. Forget the rhetoric; forget the history lessons. Minister, what will you do to protect patients in this province now?

Hon Mr Wilson: The obstetricians in Mississauga felt compelled to put out a release today that says, "As a measure of our good faith in those negotiations, we will resume providing care to pregnant women as long as meaningful negotiations continue." Again, I have more faith in Ontario's doctors and I have more faith in the public than the honourable member obviously has.

What the public very clearly has told me and what they've told their doctors over the past few weeks is that they want the government and the doctors to solve some of these long, historic problems, and that is what we are fully committed to doing. No one in the public wants to see the government and the doctors fighting, nor do they want to see the opposition members stirring the pot. These are very serious times. This government is committed to solving the frustrations and concerns that have been long held by Ontario's doctors.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health should know that people in Sudbury are extremely

concerned and unanimous in their view that your hospital closing commission's report on Sudbury's hospitals is seriously flawed.

Representatives from the district health council, members of the regional municipality of Sudbury, the seniors' advisory group and the local labour council have all expressed their dismay. They believe the commission's report underestimates the role of Sudbury as the regional health care centre for the northeast. They believe the commission has made no mention of the very pressing and grave labour adjustment issues that will result in the closing of two hospitals. They believe the commission does not adequately address the subject of community-based care, transitional care and home care.

Minister, you have appointed this commission that can order the closure of hospitals, but it cannot guarantee the funding of all the transitional costs, nor can it guarantee the funding of an adequate service once the hospital system is so dramatically cut back.

These people from Sudbury want to meet with you, and both the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Sudbury East have asked to meet with you. Will you commit to meet with these people from Sudbury in order to address the concerns they have raised about the commission's report?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I don't think the community is unanimous as the honourable member has said. I've got a letter here dated October 24 from Sudbury Memorial Hospital. It's one of the hospitals very directly affected by the interim decisions put forward by the commission. It says:

"The following action was decided by the Sudbury Memorial Hospital board of governors: to endorse the commission's interim direction to create the new single Sudbury Regional Hospital Corp and end historic divisions; to meet with other Sudbury hospital board representatives to discuss appropriate strategies to plan the development of this new entity; to invite the Health Services Restructuring Commission to appoint a facilitator/mediator immediately to assist in developing the plan for this new hospital corporation; to work with the other hospitals to develop a system-wide human resources/labour adjustment plan with our stakeholders."

I have all kinds of quotes, including editorials from the Sudbury Star. Dr John Malloy, who is head of emergency services for Memorial Hospital, said, "Thank God somebody's finally brought some common sense to the chaos we've been living under for years and years."

We're very much in touch with the people of Sudbury and their desire to improve hospital services and health care services in the region, and to make sure we have top-quality services for the people of the northeast.

Mr Hampton: It's a very simple question. Municipal representatives, representatives of senior citizens, other people who are very concerned about how the hospital closing decisions were arrived at, people who are representative of people in Sudbury, want to meet with the Minister of Health. The hospital closing commission has the authority to close hospitals but doesn't have the authority to order reinvestment, doesn't have the authority to require that money be put aside for labour adjustment, doesn't have the authority to require that money be put aside to ensure the provision of community services.

It's a very simple request. People who are representative of Sudbury want to meet with you to talk about some of the concerns they feel were not addressed in the commission's report. A simple request: Will you meet with that representative group from Sudbury and will you meet with it soon?

Hon Mr Wilson: A law was passed to ensure that we took politics out of the hospital restructuring process. The law requires that during this period from the interim decision to the final decisions rendered by the commission, all members of the public, all MPPs — because there are no special rules for MPPs — all people are to direct their concerns to the commission. So no, I will not set up a separate process, a special hearing for MPPs. I, for example, saw our department's response yesterday. We're following the rules as one of the parties. The deputy minister wrote the ministry's and the government's response yesterday, which is a public response, and I expect all members to follow the law. As my predecessor George McCague used to say, "The law is the law is the law."

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Education. During question period on Tuesday, October 29, of this week, the leader of the third party made some disparaging comments about Tilbury District High School, operated by the Kent County Board of Education. Quite frankly, I'm surprised the member for Essex-Kent, Mr Hoy, who represents the fine people of Tilbury, hasn't risen to protest. I'd like to quote from Hansard. The leader of the third party said:

"A young woman named Kim Wright went back to her high school this past week and found that instead of two guidance counsellors there is now one, and that guidance counsellor is hard pressed to deal with all the kids who need her help; classes and grades have been doubled up; when a teacher is sick, the class is cancelled instead of a supply teacher being brought in; and students are afraid they will have to go to another high school to get their classes."

Have you had a chance to investigate these serious allegations?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Chatham-Kent for his question because it's an opportunity to set the record straight. It's unfortunate that the leader of the third party set out to deliberately distort the Kent County Board of Education's record yesterday, so let me set that record straight: The facts are that the individual who was named by the leader of the third party yesterday —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I say to the Minister of Education that you can't claim that the leader of the third party set out to distort the information. That is in essence suggesting that they are manufacturing and lying. You must withdraw it.

1510

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will withdraw it, then, and suggest that the comments in the statement made by the leader of the third party had the effect of distorting the record on the Kent County Board of Education. Let me be specific.

The Speaker: Minister of Education, I think I just spent about 30 minutes suggesting to this House that you can't indirectly do what you can't directly do. So it's either withdraw or don't withdraw. Make a call right now.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will set the record straight on the Kent County Board of Education's record. The individual who was mentioned by the leader of the third party yesterday I am told graduated from the Tilbury school last year. What I've heard about this individual is very impressive, as both a volunteer and an employment record, because this individual has been a volunteer and, I understand, a summer student for the New Democratic Party. She told the principal and guidance department head at the school that she was doing research on secondary school education. For the record, the guidance department staff was reduced by one period from the previous year, which is the equivalent of one sixth of a teacher, because of declining enrolment.

Mr Carroll: Minister, as you know, both Kent county boards of education are among the lowest-spending boards in the province. During that same exchange, the leader of the third party asked, "How would you have done it differently at Tilbury?" Minister, according to the director of education for the Kent County Board of Education, have any of your changes resulted in any cutbacks at the Tilbury District High School?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the member that no, that's not the case. To set the record straight, let me quote from the Kent county director of education. He told us, "The Kent county board has not reduced any teaching staff due to the recent budget cutbacks, but this year's" — I think this is important, and I hope the members opposite will listen — "reductions are a direct result of the cuts imposed by the social contract in the previous year." I think the leader of the third party would own those cuts.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Minister, in March 1992, the Ontario government and Bombardier Inc signed a deal to buy de Havilland Inc to save the thousands of jobs that were at risk. Under the deal, Ontario spent \$49 million for a 49% stake and Bombardier spent \$51 million for the rest. The deal provides that Bombardier has the legal right to buy out the government stake by January 31, 1997, for \$49 million. Bombardier has indicated that they are going to exercise their option as provided for in the deal.

Minister, this morning there was a news report that you were having second thoughts about the deal. You said, "We have the right to negotiate another arrangement." Minister, could you tell me under what provisions or what authority you think you have the right to renegotiate this deal?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to respond to the member for Wilson Heights. At the present time, our government and Bombardier are in negotiation about the subject that the member referred to. Because it's

under negotiation, I think I'll decline to give comment any further.

Interjection.

Mr Kwinter: I find it rather strange that I called de Havilland this morning —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, you can't say those kinds of things in this place. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I will withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr Kwinter: I find the minister's comments very strange. I called de Havilland this morning. They were calling an emergency meeting because they have never even heard of this suggestion. They said they don't know where this came from. They have a deal. The contract has no provision to renegotiate and I'd like to just read into the record the response that the Minister of Transportation made to my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville in a question about Highway 407.

He said: "This is something the previous government initiated and agreed to do. All we've done, basically, is inherit what the previous government had negotiated. We have a contract that we must abide by. We've done just that. We've abided by the contracts that were in place in order to deliver the 407, and that's what we're doing."

I would suggest to you, if you're going to start renegotiating unilaterally, then instead of doing it with de Havilland, take a look at 407, because, as an analyst said in the paper today, the de Havilland deal was the deal of the century. I can tell you that the 407 deal was the deal of the millennium. That is where you should be looking if you're going to start renegotiating deals, which I don't think you can do.

Hon Mr Saunderson: In response to the supplementary question by the member for Wilson Heights, those two deals you are referring to were negotiated by the previous government and also, I'd like to say to you that, yes, there is an exit time; it is January 31, 1997. We are working with Bombardier on that timing and that's all I can say at this time.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask you about events that are continuing resulting from your comments the other day after this weekend's events, particularly comments that you made about the Arab community.

As you know, there was a press conference held earlier today by members of the Canadian Arab Federation. They expressed some very serious continuing concerns about your comments. They certainly appreciated the fact that you issued an apology and they acknowledged that and accepted that, as I am sure you know.

But they made the point that they believe you should understand that, as the Premier of the province, your comments have a serious impact and in fact reverberate across the province. Their main concern, as I heard it, is that what your comments did was to reflect some deeply ingrained, negative imagery of Arabs and, I'm sure unwittingly, encourage racist sentiments and expressions right across the province, and also imply that these Ontarians are not seen to be part of the mainstream.

I just want to ask you, Premier, do you understand fully the impact of the comments that you made and the fact that to deal with them involves more than just a simple apology?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you are aware that I acknowledged that they were in the parade, the context within which that was reported that caused offence, and I've apologized for that.

Mr Silipo: I am troubled by the Premier's curt response and what I see as an attempt to just dismiss the issue as if it was just "another goof that I made" or another unfortunate comment. The point is that this goes much deeper than that because, as one example of the kind of sentiment that your comments have unleashed, the group today released, among other things, the comments that were called in by one person to their headquarters, making the statement as follows: "You have no right to criticize my government. You should go home where you come from."

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Who said that?

Mr Silipo: A caller to the Canadian Arab Federation said that. The point that the federation and the others who were at the press conference are making, Premier, is that in fact your comments are unleashing exactly this kind of a response and are making those comments acceptable.

They've asked to meet with you, Premier, and they've asked to meet so they can talk to you directly and impress upon you the importance of what you have done and look at ways in which you can rectify, beyond the apology, the damage that you have caused. Will you do that, Premier? Will you meet with them and will you look seriously in your heart and in your soul —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Dovercourt, order. Premier.

1520

Hon Mr Harris: I think I acknowledged that all those who participated on Saturday did so, and I congratulate them, in a very fine way. I also acknowledged that if they had concerns, I would be happy to meet with them and accept positive suggestions about why they were in the parade or concerns they may have had.

In this case, as you know, there were press reports that indicated I acknowledged they were in the parade. This has caused some concern. I have apologized for that, and if they would like a meeting and are prepared to request one, I would probably meet with them the same as I do with all groups that wish to meet with me.

I would like to indicate, as well, that I have had many, many calls from many members of the Arab community saying: "We understand. We like your policies. We like you. We take no offence. Thank you for the apology as well."

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I have a response to a question asked on October 29 by the member for Hamilton Centre. He asked a question about many non-profit organizations in Jackson Square in the city of Hamilton. I would like to report to him today that the space occupied by these non-

profit organizations in Jackson Square is assessed as vacant. Any decision regarding the status of those non-profit organizations as occupants is entirely up to the landlord. There is no connection between the occupancy status of non-profit organizations and the current assessment appeal by Jackson Square.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): First of all, I appreciate the minister getting back so promptly, and like you, I'll review your response and see if that squares with the understanding people have in my community. If it doesn't, rest assured, Minister, I'll be back on your doorstep in this House.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Education. I read in the press yesterday that cash-starved boards of education in Toronto are moving to allow full-scale advertising on the outside of school buses. Next month I'm introducing a private member's bill aimed at protecting school children. In researching my bill, I've learned how often drivers ignore the warning message on the back of school buses. Advertising is a distraction by its nature. I have spoken to the Ontario School Bus Association, which is greatly concerned. They say no to external advertising.

Minister, you are responsible for the safety of school children. This isn't about the propriety of endorsement; it is about children's lives. Will you commit today that you will not allow advertising outside school buses which would compromise the safety of Ontario school children?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to assure the member opposite that I have not yet been advised of any intentions to advertise on school buses. I know there has been some speculation about that for a number of years in the province and that a board is now looking at doing advertising on buses, but I don't think there are final plans for that, at least I have not been advised of them.

I've talked to the Ontario School Bus Association about this as well. They are concerned that if there are obstructive signs it might cause a safety problem. I can assure you that both I and the Minister of Transportation will review the situation if in fact it imposes any safety hazards on school children.

Mr Hoy: My bill, which amends the Highway Traffic Act, will significantly increase fines for drivers who ignore flashing school lights and assign vehicle liability to owners when the driver cannot be identified. The Ontario School Bus Association supports my bill. Will you give me your commitment that you will place the safety of children first and work with the Minister of Transportation and other stakeholders to ensure child safety on our roads.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to again thank the member opposite for his interest in the safety of schoolchildren. Of course, I'm interested. I think everyone in this chamber is interested in making sure that the safety of school children is not jeopardized. I can assure the member once again, and I'm pleased to, that the Minister and Transportation and I will make sure that the safety concerns are

addressed if there is any advertising done on school buses in Ontario.

Again I'd like to assure the member opposite that I have been in contact with the Ontario School Bus Association. I talked to their director and their president this week and I'm very well apprised of the situation.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AGENCY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last week my leader raised with you the fact that in a speech you gave on September 24, less than a month ago, you said that the folding of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency into the WCB would not result in the staff being laid off. You said in that speech, "The functions and staff of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency have been integrated into the WCB."

These staff members were shocked on October 10 when they were told verbally that they were going to receive layoff notices very soon. When you were asked about this by my leader last week, you said: "I understand it is being resolved and no one at all is being laid off at the present time. For you to indicate that anybody is being laid off at the present time, you know that's not true."

Yesterday seventeen of those staff received their layoff notices. Some of them are here in the gallery today. Will you stand in your place and advise these workers that you will honour your promise, cancel the layoffs and ensure that we don't lose that expertise in terms of preventing workplace accidents?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): As you know, we have integrated the activities of the health and safety agency into the WCB. What we are endeavouring to do is to focus the activities of the WCB on prevention. There is an internal restructuring taking place, and yes, there were some individuals who I understand, as a result of the information I received yesterday, received their layoff notices.

Mr Christopherson: It certainly sounds to me like you're acknowledging that your word is not as good as your policy, not as good as your bond. The fact of the matter is that you assured people in the audience on September 24 that the functions and the staff would be integrated into the WCB. You didn't say just the function or just the mandate or just the intent; you said the functions and the staff. Then you ridiculed my leader when he had the temerity to put your own words in front of you because these workers had received a verbal notice. Now it has happened. They've received formal layoff notice.

Many times I ask you specific questions, you give me generalities. I'm asking you again specifically, will you stand in your place today and honour the commitment that you made to ensure that the functions and staff of the workplace health agency be put into the WCB? Cancel those layoffs and keep your word to those workers.

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's very important to remember there are still 30 members of the staff employed in the function. I would just indicate to you that our focus is on prevention. We have integrated those activities —

Mr Christopherson: You broke your promise. I can't believe you have the audacity to stand there and say that. They're right up there. Tell them. They're right there. Tell them your word is no good.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

ONTARIO-QUEBEC AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I have heard from many food producers in my riding that they often feel they are not on a level playing field with their Quebec counterparts. Specifically, Ontario hog producers and packers are concerned about Quebec's stabilization program and believe it is hurting Ontario's industry. It is my understanding that the minister recently met with his counterpart from Quebec. I wonder if he could share with the members of the House the highlights of those discussions he had with the Honourable Mr Julien on the issue of hog subsidies.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague the member for Bruce for the question. I met with the Honourable Guy Julien last Thursday in Quebec City. We discussed many, many problems that are not unique to Ontario but are shared with Quebec.

The honourable member is right when she says that it is the view of the packers and the producers that these payouts are responsible for a large number of weaner hogs leaving Ontario being finished and processed in the province of Quebec. Honourable members will know that this results in fewer hogs available for processors in Ontario. Honourable members will be pleased to know that the minister from Quebec has initiated substantial decreases in support levels and will announce later this year what indeed these reductions in support levels will be.

1530

Mrs Fisher: Ontario food producers and processors have also raised their concerns with many other Quebec subsidy programs. It seems that all provinces except one have signed the safety net framework agreement as part of the bilateral agreements with the federal government. It seems that Quebec would like some further amendments to the framework agreement. I believe that Ontario farm leaders would be critical of the Ontario ministry if we agreed to amend the current framework agreement as such and would like to know the minister's position on this issue.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The member for Bruce brings this House a very important question for the agrifood industry. I certainly share the views of the industry about maintaining a level playing field to allow for fair and open competition without government intervention. I told the Quebec Minister of Agriculture that it took a long time to negotiate the agreements on the safety nets and that I'm not prepared to make any amendments at this

time to simply accommodate them. It's important that the federal government is seen to be treating all provinces fairly and equally, and I'm confident that is the treatment we all will get as provinces in this country.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. The 30-day appeal period is over and Sudbury anxiously awaits the final decision of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. It has come to my attention that one of your members on the Health Services Restructuring Commission has informed a member of a local hospital board that his commission, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, will be launching a targeted and very high-profile communication strategy in Sudbury starting today. According to this individual, the lobbying strategy will be targeting the key opinion leaders in our region to try to win them over to the commission's final decision in Sudbury. The following quote is almost verbatim from the member of your commission: "We will be using the key issues contained in individual briefs and do some horse trading to win certain groups over in order to gain their support."

My question is threefold: (1) Are you aware of the lobbying strategy undertaken by the commission for Sudbury? (2) Is there a coalition between the commission's lobbying scheme and the work Kerbel Communications did for your ministry in Sudbury? (3) Is that a mandate of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, as outlined in the mandate —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I appreciate you didn't get a supplementary, but you can't ask them both in the same one. Minister.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The answers are no, no and yes, it is the mandate of the commission to explain its decisions.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: Yesterday during debate of Bill 81, the Fewer Politicians Act —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. It's a point of personal privilege and I'm having difficulty hearing it. Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr Len Wood: Earlier there were a number of points of order raised concerning some of the comments Premier Mike Harris made in his rebuttal. I want you to look at this in Hansard, at page 4929, "You are shameless in your pursuit of more politicians and big government and more money in your own pocket and less for the people." There's also another sentence that is —

The Speaker: Order. Member for Cochrane North, just take your seat for a moment, please. I think your House leader brought that point of order up earlier.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is a point of privilege now.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, you're right. Go ahead.

Mr Len Wood: This is a matter of personal privilege and, Speaker, I would like you to take a look at it. I know you're not going to be able to make a ruling at this

point in time, but we had discussions where people were thrown out of the House. One of our caucus members was thrown out. One of the Liberal members was thrown out just yesterday in the afternoon. We have accusations, what I consider accusations. During the rerun of the debate last night people are calling my apartment, people are calling my office and saying, "Is it true that the Premier of the province of Ontario is accusing you of filling your pockets?"

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane North, you've asked me if I would take it away to review it and report back to you. I'll take it away and review it and report back to you. I'll give you my undertaking. And it's a point of privilege; there's no such thing as a point of personal privilege. Thank you.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Mr Speaker, I rise to ask you two things. One, if you would allow me to clarify comments I made yesterday in talking about the members lobbying for more members, I think in the context it was more money for politicians, but as I read Hansard it could be interpreted as an individual as opposed to all politicians, and I'd like to clarify that was certainly not my intention. That may help you with any ruling.

While you're looking at them, though, you might want to look at the comments that were made by the member for Cochrane North at the top of the page with reference to me.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm obviously going to review the comments of the member for Cochrane North, and I will also review the comments outlined by the Premier.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic; and

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require elective procedures to be funded; and

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion clinics; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the province exclusively to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is indeed hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

It's a pleasure to affix my name to this petition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Essex county.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 800,000 children who ride the school buses of Ontario are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy from unsafe drivers who are not stopping for school buses; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and a vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction,

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 78 be passed. The bill doubles the existing range of fines for identified drivers and establishes vehicle owner liability. We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I have affixed my name to the petition.

1540

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all employees have the right to a safe work environment, free from workplace harassment and violence; and

"Whereas sexual harassment has rightfully been recognized in the province of Ontario as an occupational health and safety issue; and

"Whereas workplace harassment is harmful to the health and wellbeing of employees and to their employers; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince was a victim of workplace harassment and Theresa's harasser did murder her at their

place of employment, and we do not want her death to have been in vain; and

"Whereas Theresa Vince's family, women's organizations and members of the workforce have been left with serious, unanswered questions and fear that this type of violence could happen again;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund a special committee comprised of grass-roots women's organizations, labour, feminist lawyers, employers, diverse communities reflective of the province of Ontario, parliamentarians. The mandate of the special committee would be to develop recommendations and guidelines that would assist all employers in creating a safe work environment that prevents workplace harassment and violence and ensures a thorough and objective investigation of harassment complaints when circumstances require.

"We make this petition in memory of Theresa Vince of Chatham, Ontario, and for all employees in every occupation."

This is signed by hundreds of people from all over the province of Ontario, and I'm proud to affix my signature.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and from residents of 370 Rathburn Road East in the great city of Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has clearly indicated that it 'wants to get out of the housing business'; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is reviewing the legal contracts and budgets of every co-op housing project in the province; and

"Whereas co-op housing is a proven success in providing affordable homes owned and managed by the people who live in them;

"We therefore request that the Ontario government sit down with the co-op housing sector to negotiate a deal which will ensure the long-term financial viability of housing co-ops and the continuance of rent-geared-to-income assistance upon which thousands of co-op members depend and which will promote greater responsibility for administration by the co-op housing sector and less interference by the government in the day-to-day operations of housing co-ops."

I affix my signature to this petition.

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly.

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas members of housing cooperatives the province over have exemplified self-sufficiency through their volunteer efforts by managing their properties; and

"Whereas housing cooperatives' cost-effectiveness has been investigated and reported by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp; and

"Whereas the very nature of housing cooperatives' internal structures has proven to provide accountability, safety and quality housing to low- and modest-income citizens; and

"Whereas housing cooperatives prevent the formation of ghettos through their income mix of resident members and ability to volunteer in the management; and

"Whereas housing cooperatives provide cultural support for members of aboriginal groups, seniors and families alike; and

"Whereas our housing cooperative model is highly commended all around the world; and

"Whereas other countries are now looking at our housing cooperative model to provide a more effective and efficient method of housing low- and modest-income people; and

"Whereas past federal and provincial governments have successfully provided affordable housing to those most in need within the cooperative housing sector; and

"Whereas present-day governments are now making plans that will adversely affect our co-op communities in Ontario;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the business of non-profit housing, including cooperatives, be preserved for the people of Ontario; and

"Be it further resolved that this government review their own reports regarding the cost-effectiveness of our self-sufficient housing cooperatives managed by volunteers and renew their commitment to support cooperative housing across Ontario."

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for so many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I still continue to receive thousands of petitions from workers upset and outraged over this government's continuing attack on WCB and health and safety protection in this province. Today I have petitions from the president of the Orillia and District Labour Council in Muskoka, Linda McDowell; from Nancy Hutchison, the health and safety coordinator, district 6, United Steelworkers of America; Herb MacDonald, United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 175; Cathy Walker of the Canadian Auto Workers; as well as from members of CUPE and OPSEU. Their petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further."

My caucus and I continue to support these workers.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS FOR SENIORS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I have a petition signed by 16 members from my community. I'm sure more would sign if they had that opportunity. Following several "whereases," we finish off with:

"Whereas the fact that a very high percentage of seniors eventually pass their road tests has led the Minister of Transportation to state that he will re-examine the requirements of issuing drivers' licences to seniors,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Transportation to develop a system of licensing that is less onerous on the senior citizens of Niagara Falls and that recognizes that when road tests are required, familiar local roads are the fairest place to assess driver ability."

I will affix my signature to this as I am sympathetic to its contents.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition signed by constituents to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government 'will not cut health care'; and

"Whereas in the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign document, 'There'll be no cuts to health care funding by

a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health and the government of the province of Ontario to reject any recommendations that would lead to a closure of any Hamilton area hospital."

I sign my signature to the petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a petition signed by many parents from schools in my area — Dovercourt Junior Public School, Perth Avenue Junior Public School, Carleton Village and Oakwood Collegiate — all from concerned parents demanding a say on education spending, petitioning the Premier of Ontario and the Ontario Minister of Education and Training and the members of provincial Parliament.

"We strongly object to any changes to be proposed by the subpanel on education finance set up by the Who Does What panel chaired by David Crombie. There has not been adequate time nor satisfactory provision for parents to express their views about how schools should be funded. We are seriously concerned that the subpanel will make recommendations that will mean much reduced funding support for our children's education. We insist that the subpanel neither continue to meet nor issue any recommendations until it includes representation on the Metro Toronto Board of Education and until the subpanel begins to conduct itself in an open, fair and democratic manner."

I've attached my signature to those as well.

1550

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a new petition but with the same message regarding the attack on the WCB and health and safety.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I continue to support these petitioners.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr Gilchrist from the standing committee on resources development presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 57, An Act to improve the Efficiency of the Environmental Approvals Process and Certain Other Matters / Projet de loi 57, Loi visant à améliorer l'efficacité du processus d'autorisation environnementale et concernant certaines autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 57 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF HAMILTON AMENDMENT ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI INTITULÉE CITY OF HAMILTON ACT, 1985

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 88, An Act to amend the City of Hamilton Act, 1985 / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la loi intitulée City of Hamilton Act, 1985.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Just briefly, the city tomorrow will be launching a formal bid to apply for an NHL franchise in New York City. As a result of that, they simply need an amendment to the City of Hamilton Act that would allow Hamilton Entertainment Convention Facilities Inc, HECFI, the corporation, to be part of the bid and get this sports franchise.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I request unanimous consent that the Legislature allow us to move a motion to have an emergency debate on the crisis that exists as a result of the rejection by doctors today of the agreement between the government and the OMA.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the emergency debate? No, there is not.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 AMÉLIORANT LE PROCESSUS D'ÉVALUATION ENVIRONNEMENTALE ET DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE

Mr Galt, on behalf of Mr Sterling, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act / Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à améliorer la protection de l'environnement, à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes et à intégrer la consultation publique à la Loi sur les évaluations environnementales.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to divide the time for debate on Bill 76 as follows: two members from our caucus to speak first and consecutively for approximately 15 minutes; from then on, a rotation between the two opposition parties. Also, I believe we have come to an agreement with our colleagues that we will complete third reading today but defer the vote until after question period on Monday, November 4, 1996.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Agreed?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): No.

The Acting Speaker: No, there's no consent. Parliamentary assistant, go ahead. There's no agreement on your motion, so go ahead.

Mr Galt: We had agreement.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Okay, to split at the start.

The Acting Speaker: Can we do it this way? Is there agreement to split the time? There's agreement to split the time. I understand the agreement is, as Mr Galt stated, for the Tories to split their time.

Ms Lankin: To split the leadoff times.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Thank you for that distinction. Is everybody clear? Okay, Dr Galt, go ahead.

Mr Galt: Today, on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Energy, the Honourable Norm Sterling, I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 76.

I'd like first to take this opportunity to thank all of those members of the public who took time to appear before the social development committee with their comments and suggestions. Their input was very valuable and resulted in a number of improvements to the legislation before us today.

The Honourable Norm Sterling and I would also like to thank the Honourable Brenda Elliott, who in her term as minister took the bill through first and second readings.

The intention of Bill 76 is to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act. With Bill 76, this government is furthering its commitment to the environmental assessment process as an important means of protecting the environment and health of our communities.

The Mike Harris government recognizes that environmental assessment has become antiquated and bureaucratic in recent years, with the process often overwhelming the results being sought. The cart has gotten somewhat ahead of the horse. Fortunately, this is eminently correctable. This government is determined to make Ontario's EA system more workable, more certain, less costly and less time-consuming. We are taking action.

The first step was the introduction of Bill 76 for its first reading on June 13, 1996. Since June, the bill has received second reading and has been the subject of public hearings before the standing committee on social development. During the hearings, we heard presentations from a number of stakeholders, both those supporting the reforms and those making recommendations for improving the bill. We've listened to these recommendations, and in some cases we've made changes accordingly.

I want to assure the members that the implementation of this legislation will be shaped by one overriding principle: the need to protect the environment. That's the reason for the Environmental Assessment Act and the reforms that we are proposing.

We have taken great pains to ensure that the key elements of environmental assessment are maintained. These include the continued requirement of EAs for the projects subject to the Environmental Assessment Act; the broad definition of the environment; the examination of alternatives in environmental decision-making; and an independent Environmental Assessment Board. These defining features of the EA process will not change.

1600

We are, however, proposing a number of new features. For the first time, proponents will be legally required to consult with the public. This will provide early access for all interested parties and ensure that issues are identified and resolved early in the EA process.

Clear and early direction will be provided to all EA participants through the development of terms of reference by the proponent. These terms will have input from the public and government agencies. They'll be approved by the Minister of Environment and Energy and will be legally binding.

This will help to avoid such nightmare situations as the Wellington-Guelph waste management plan. They spent \$4 million, worked for 10 years and ended up with no results. The problem with the Wellington-Guelph plan was that the EA studies weren't focused from the outset. Approved terms of reference will provide that focus. Proponents will have a clearer idea of what is required of them, and interested parties will have a clearer idea of what is being proposed.

The foundations will be laid at the outset of the EA process for more efficient and productive follow-through. Other measures will also keep the process moving smoothly along. Tight time lines will be established, through regulation, for all key decisions. This will provide certainty for all participants and ensure that decisions are given in a timely fashion. We want to get to a yes faster for projects that are indeed environmentally sound and a no for those that are not environmentally sound.

New powers will be given to the minister to send contentious issues to mediation. This will help to resolve issues before positions become entrenched and polarized. Again, there will be time limits on mediation. If hearings are required, the minister would be able to focus the discussion on specific outstanding issues.

Finally, Bill 76 will achieve the goal of "one project, one assessment" by giving the minister authority to harmonize the environmental assessment requirements with those of other jurisdictions.

Consultation is a key feature of the Environmental Assessment Act, and we want to expand its use wherever appropriate. We have added the requirements for proponents to consult with the public when developing the terms of reference. We've also amended the bill to require environmental assessments when municipalities contract with third parties for waste disposal. This comes as a result of several groups and individuals who appeared before the committee with concerns that there might not have been sufficient opportunity for public input in the decision-making surrounding waste disposal.

Another change will provide for mediation without prejudice. This means that all parties must agree to the release of information regarding issues that have yet to be resolved. There will now be a longer transition period for using both the old and the new EA process.

Two other amendments put forward by the opposition parties include a provision that only Ministry of Environment and Energy employees can act as directors under the Environmental Assessment Act and a requirement for public notice and written reasons for most decisions by the minister.

I believe the changes that have been made to Bill 76 because of the hearings have improved it, as well as the original writing, and will lead to a better environmental assessment process for the province of Ontario. This is a goal that is shared by all members of this Legislature and by all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I am pleased to have this opportunity also to talk about Bill 76. In addition to retaining the essential features of the Environmental Assessment Act, Bill 76 actually improves and

strengthens it with a number of important firsts. Dr Galt has already mentioned some of them, but it's important that we repeat them so that the public understand.

For the first time, the public will be guaranteed a say through access to the EA process from the outset. For the first time, early and clear directions will be given to ensure that proponents know what kind of information they must include in their environmental assessment documents. For the first time, tight time frames will be imposed up front for each key step in the decision-making process. Mediation will be available for the first time also, to resolve conflicts in a timelier and less costly manner. For the first time, the minister will have the opportunity to reject an incomplete assessment early in the process. For the first time also, there will be a provision to harmonize the federal environmental assessment process. This says no to duplication and overlap and yes to cutting red tape.

For the first time, the role of the class EAs will be made clear in legislation and the Minister of Environment will for the first time have the power to focus Environmental Assessment Board hearings on outstanding contentious issues. Hearings will not have to go back to square one and cover all issues.

One of the most important parts of Bill 76 is consultation. Consultation of course is essential to any democratic process. Nowhere is this more true and important than when it comes to environmental protection. After all, environmental decisions can have a profound impact on people's lives. We must remember that when an environmentally significant project is set up in a community it is the community that must live with the consequences. That's why the decision-making process has to be as inclusive as possible. People have the right to voice their concern when it comes to such far-reaching decisions. This right should be ensured right from the beginning, rather than when things have proceeded to a point where the momentum is hard to stop.

The airing of public concerns is at the heart of the environmental assessment. In addition to ensuring that the important environmental issues get resolved, consultation gives people from all sides the confidence that their concerns have been heard and adequately dealt with.

At the same time, however, we must ensure that consultation remains focused and constructive. Too many important opportunities and initiatives failed when endless consultations were used to hold up the process without ever getting to the point. We need to bring back consultation in the true sense of the word, to collect meaningful public input.

As I mentioned earlier, under the bill, consultation on the assessment is being required for the first time. This will give all interested parties the earliest possible access to the decision-making process. This levels the playing field by making sure that everyone knows what the issues are right at the outset. It's especially helpful to proponents, who need to know what concerns they must address through their environmental assessment documents. With early input, proponents will be spared having to go too far without being certain of what issues are considered most relevant by other interested parties. Of course, smart proponents already seek out this information at the

earliest stages of the environmental assessment preparation, but until now they haven't been legally required to do so. The legal requirement reflects the fact that people have a right to early input. It is not a privilege bestowed upon them by the project proponents. People shouldn't feel that they are reliant on the goodwill or the good sense of those proposing to do business in our community.

We also want to discourage any proponents who think that they don't have to consider public concerns with respect to their actions and decisions. Previously, short-sighted proponents would end up with more issues to resolve at the end of the process and now they won't have that option to shoot themselves in the foot, as it were.

The minister will now have the mechanism to send issues to mediation at any time during the environmental assessment process so that they can be quickly resolved and then get off the table more quickly.

The expanded use of consultation will come into play most often with terms of reference. These terms, as the members know, set out the kinds of information in the level of detail required to make an informed decision on an environmental assessment. Proponents will now be required to consult with interested persons on these terms for the purpose of developing their environmental assessments or class EAs. This must be done before submission of the environmental assessment documents to the minister. The proponent will also be required to provide a description of this consultation and the results obtained. This requirement parallels the condition that the proponents must report on consultations in the environmental assessment document.

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These provisions will strengthen the public's ability to influence decision-making at the terms of reference stage. Having these terms of reference approved by the minister will make them legally binding at later stages in the process. In the past, consultations have not been focused and the process was getting derailed by issues that weren't necessarily relevant.

Public consultation is the cornerstone of any successful environmental assessment process. Throughout the development of Bill 76, this government has gone to great effort to enshrine the public's right to a say in environmental assessment. I believe that especially with the latest version of the bill, we'll succeed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address issues related to the environment and in particular to this bill. As you know, whenever we look at the bill — and I'm pleased my friend from St Catharines-Brock was able to participate in the debate this afternoon and can now go home to give out Halloween candies before I can. But I do want to address a number of issues that are related to this piece of legislation and look at the legislation in the context of the entire record of the government and what I believe to be the biases that the government may have against the environment.

I was just looking with some interest at some of the environment officials who are here today who I recognize

have served many governments. I want to compliment them for the service that they provide. They provided it to a Conservative government, a Liberal government, an NDP government and a Reform government now — oh, I'm sorry, a Conservative government now. I admire their work, because they have to be flexible. One has to understand that ministry officials have to be flexible. They're very professional in their approach. They provide the best advice that they believe can serve the people of this province, and then the people who are elected make the choices as to whether they'll accept that advice, modify that advice or ignore that advice. It speaks well to our ministry officials that they have been able to adapt to all of the governments and the instructions that are there.

I think that has always been one of the strengths of the public service system in Ontario — the civil service, as we used to call it at one time — and that is that it has largely been a non-partisan, very professional group of people who have served the people of this province. That's something important for our democracy, to see that happen, because I think all of us, as we approach government, look at the civil service and say, "Whatever government was there previously, they must all be wedded to the policies of that government and infiltrated by people who have an allegiance to that government." What you discover after a few months in the job is that those suspicions can often be removed and in fact they are there as neutral people, as people who are expert in many fields and they give service to us.

So I want to pay tribute to the Ministry of Environment officials, many of whom I recognize, who continue to give good service to the people of this province and I hope that will be the case for many years to come. There are fewer of them these days because, as the parliamentary assistant would know, this government has made a choice to drastically reduce the budget of the Ministry of Environment.

So when we look at the environmental assessment process — and the Speaker who is in the chair at the present time, as an environmentalist who used to give me advice when I was minister and she was somewhere else in Toronto, would recognize how important that is. I look at that and say, well, this is one ministry — I suppose most ministers could make this speech — which requires the necessary staff and the necessary resources, the necessary funding to carry out its responsibilities in an appropriate fashion. You cannot protect the environment, you cannot anticipate the problems and deal with them before in fact they become serious, if indeed you do not have those resources. I always felt that the previous minister, who is in the House this afternoon, was not allowed to have the kind of resources that she needed to carry out that responsibility. I said that on many occasions, that I felt bad watching as the government chopped constantly the Ministry of Environment, because no minister can carry out that responsibility without those resources. The new minister is going to have to do that and he's going to find it a particular challenge.

When I look at the legislation that's come forward from this government or the policy initiatives, they are largely designed to move us back 20 or 30 years in terms

of our treatment of the environment. My very good friend, the municipal affairs minister, made a rather telling comment, I'm told — he will correct me; I know he's said it wasn't perhaps this way — when he was in Ottawa and he said, "I think we need more construction cranes and fewer whooping cranes in the province of Ontario," and he nods acquiescently. I know that would be well received at the Albany Club, that particular statement, if indeed it were made.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We need both.

Mr Bradley: He says we need both and probably that's true. That statement was really in keeping with what the government wants in Ontario, in my view, today, and that is that the protection of the environment has been moved back several notches from what it has been in recent years.

I think that's a mistake for the following reason: because I suspect, from talking to people of all political backgrounds, that the environment is a very important issue. I have many friends in the Conservative Party locally, in my constituency, and across this province who have had a genuine concern about the environment and indeed who participated in trying to improve legislation and regulations and policies so that the environment would be better protected. Keep in mind that the environment ministry was in fact established by a previous Progressive Conservative government in this province. It was strengthened as time went on.

There were several very ambitious initiatives that took place during the 1985 to 1990 period. The economic recession made it difficult for the New Democratic Party to move extensively in this field, but again, if I look at what people are saying, even polls that you people do or whoever does them, you will see that even when the economic issues are in the forefront, people in this province still believe when you scratch that surface that the environment is important to protect, whether they're in the agricultural parts of the province, the resource-rich parts of the province or the urban areas.

So when I look at the Environmental Assessment Act, I don't think there's any piece of any legislation anybody can say is perfect, and the government is entitled to examine all previous legislation, as it should, and try to improve it. This is a tricky one. This is a tough one. I don't pretend for a moment the government can have an easy time with this because if we move in one direction, there are going to be people who say that you are abandoning the environment. If you move in another direction, they say you're overly restrictive. Even when I was minister and we put together a committee of people to look at the environmental assessment process, it was extremely difficult to get a consensus. There was a consensus on some of the problems that existed. The consensus was difficult to reach on what those solutions might be.

I think the present Minister of Environment suggested this in one or two of his answers and that was if the government errs in the field of the environment, it should err in protecting the environment instead of abandoning those provisions which might, let's say, have a detrimental effect.

So when I look at what the government is doing and the general attitude of its members towards the environment, I worry. I worry because I sat through hearings to do with the Planning Act and that's somewhat associated with environmental assessment, when you think of planning and environmental assessment. I thought there were many backward steps taken in the Planning Act; some of them were not. Some of the provisions were quite all right I think with many people in this province, but I worried immensely, and I've said this on many occasions. My friend from Middlesex is here, so I have to mention this again, how the committee system I think failed us with the Planning Act, which is an environmental act to a large extent. Because, as I've mentioned before and I think it's important to reiterate — not in any way to embarrass the member for Middlesex because I wouldn't want to ever do that, and I say that on a sincere basis — I remember here was a professional planner, much more professional than I in his knowledge of the Planning Act and of planning processes, who had to remain silent during the committee hearings because I suspect that if he were to offer some suggestions, he may well have confirmed what many municipalities have said and what many ministries have said, perhaps privately: that they don't have the staff to speed up the process the way the government would like to speed the process up. 1620

I think that's important. That's a debate I had with some of my colleagues in cabinet who thought that the process should be speeded up. I said, "It can be, if you're prepared to have the appropriate staff there to be able to deal with it in an expeditious manner." Because you can't deal with it in a non-expeditious manner.

I think of the city of Richmond Hill that is dealing with this situation with the condominiums. I am sure there are people and municipalities who say: "We must get this development through quickly. It's good for our economy. We need this boost." Then we find out in this situation that there are severe difficulties with this particular development and, I have to believe, because people in the municipality years ago didn't look as carefully as they might at it. Now the present minister has to answer questions in the hallway or the other ministers, when really this was something that happened a number of years ago.

But the point I make is, whenever you weaken the environmental assessment process, whenever you weaken the planning process to make it less onerous, you increase the risk that in fact this is going to happen.

Hon Mr Leach: That was when you were the minister.

Mr Bradley: It was indeed; that's why I mention that when you weaken it you increase the risk of this happening. When you turn over more and more to the municipalities who don't have the resources, the chances of these things happening are greater and greater.

I can remember a development in the Kitchener-Waterloo area that had significant problems because it was built near or on an old landfill site and they had an explosion, a methane gas problem.

That's why I say the environmental assessment process, while it may be bothersome to some in this province, is an important process to protect. I believe that the

government in some provisions — not all provisions — of this legislation is in fact taking a step backward.

But when you look at the environmental assessment process, we will note that this government has disbanded the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee. I always thought that was a very useful committee because there are many contentious issues out there. Ordinarily, there are going to be people who demand this come to a full hearing of the Environmental Assessment Board. And yet, in the mind of the minister or the mind of ministry officials, it may well be that their view is that there is not a compelling case to do so, but many concerns have been raised.

So what we would do is send out the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee to take a look at it. They would bring a report back to the minister and often the proponent would find that a full hearing was in fact avoided because the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee — objective people, professional people on it, top-notch people — would make that recommendation to the minister and would, as I say, take into account what the ministry officials and others had provided in the way of information.

I think this government has made a mistake. I know it looks good when you want to check them off, and some in the Reform Party here want to check these off. "We have eliminated this agency; we have eliminated that agency." When you do that, I know there's a certain group of people who will applaud you. They are a minority in the province, but they will applaud you and they will go to your fund-raisers. I am told the fund-raisers are highly successful today and I am going to tell you, that doesn't surprise me a bit because I can think of a lot of people who are going to be pleased with what you have done.

You have disbanded the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement Advisory Committee. Again, I guess it had too many environmentalists on it. But I'd point out to you that in fact it had representatives of industry and representatives of municipalities. It had environmentalists who were on it, a good cross-section. Even the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale would have looked objectively at it and said it was a good committee. And yet you've abandoned it. I know he must be deeply disappointed that this has happened, knowing his genuine concern for the environment. But I digress, and I should not do so.

The Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement Advisory Committee was very helpful because it was a major initiative of the Ministry of the Environment to grind down the amount of pollution that was going into our waterways. It was viewed by people across the world as very innovative. People came from Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and the United States to see this program which was developed, called the municipal-industrial strategy for abatement.

Now my fear is —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Don't fear.

Mr Bradley: The member for Lambton is advising. There are perhaps people from the Lambton area who are in the industries who are a bit apprehensive about it, and when the program started out there was indeed some considerable problem that had arisen because people were

suspicious of one another. What happened was that people from the industries and from the environmental groups and from other areas were brought together and hashed out the problems ahead of time. They looked at them and came up with some solutions that avoided some major confrontations down the line, and as a result Ontario became a leader.

I'm told there is a weakening of this program. I know there are fewer people who are able to enforce it because you've drastically cut the staff of the Ministry of Environment, you've drastically cut the funding and the resources available to the Ministry of Environment. The polluters are applauding. I can hear them now. I can hear the champagne glasses ringing in the high places of this province —

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): The Albany Club.

Mr Bradley: I won't say the Albany Club — it would be unfair to say that — but in high places of this province as you dismantle many of these initiatives which have been positive for the people of this province.

You have disbanded the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards, and I don't know why, because I heard the present minister say that it was important to change standards, that standards had to be upgraded. Why on earth would you abandon the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards if indeed you wish to upgrade and change some of these standards? It doesn't make any sense to do so. It may just mean you're going to turn that over to the polluters. I hope not.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): You can't think of any other way.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale may want to sit on such a committee and make his representations, but I might not agree with him on that.

You have disbanded the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy. I was talking about the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and his statement about whooping cranes and construction cranes, and his interjection was that he hoped to see both in the province; fair enough. That is what the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy was all about: trying to demonstrate that a good environment and a good economy could exist side by side. There was a lot of progress made; again, consensus-building that was taking place in the province. Some people who previously had viewed industry with extreme suspicion and other people in the industrial groups who had viewed the people in the environmental groups with extreme suspicion were brought together around the table and were developing policies which were good for this province, but that wasn't to be because we need the checklist for the Reform Party supporters to go, "We have eliminated all of these."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, come to order, please.

Mr Bradley: I will allow him some opportunity perhaps at the end to comment. He's always interesting to listen to.

You have terminated the funding for the blue box program locally, a highly successful program emulated by

many. There were the naysayers to begin with. I remember some of them at the municipal level who said: "This can't possibly work. You know, it's never worked. It didn't work in Rochester." Now, as I go back to St Catharines and put my blue box out, I see there are blue boxes all over my neighbourhood, out there with an increased number of items in them. It's a huge success. I think the government was wise in providing some assistance for that program, and now that's been completely abandoned.

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"We're going to give them more powers," says the Minister of Municipal Affairs, so they should be happy with more powers — less money and more powers. That's a dubious exchange, and I know that in his heart of hearts the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing probably doesn't believe he should be bullied by his cabinet colleagues into doing this. I know that in his heart he is a strong supporter of municipalities, and I sympathize with him when I see them impose things on him, when I see David Crombie usurping his authority.

David Crombie, if he wanted to run and get elected to this House — he's a good fellow, by the way; great fellow, David Crombie; I admire him. But there he is; I don't know who the Minister of Municipal Affairs is any more, or the Minister of Education, because David Crombie makes all of the comments about what's going on. I have to read the Crombie reports before I know what's going on, and I want to tell the minister I'm sympathetic when I see Crombie pulling the rug out from under him on so many occasions.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member from Rexdale asks, "What else have we done to the detriment of the environment?" You have cut the green communities program, which boosted Ontario's green industry and saved homeowners and businesses money. I've always said, and I think there are many people out there who agree that there is money to be made in green industries, in energy control; in other words, conservation that can take place in the field of energy. It's not easy when the gas and oil are flowing as they are, but as soon as there's some kind of crisis — whether the price goes way up or there's simply a shortage for some other reason — people begin looking at these. We have to be forward-looking. We have to continue these initiatives for energy conservation and other forms of conservation.

What else have you done? You've terminated the environmental research grants. They were really important. I heard the Premier say the other day, "We have to have a highly educated, first-rate province." Many of these grants that were provided, largely to people at universities, were extremely helpful in developing new methods of dealing with environmental problems or, better yet, preventing environmental problems. Again, the money's been taken away from that.

Ontario was becoming a leader. People came from all over the world. Indeed, they would invite our officials to go to Sweden and Paris and places like that to make presentation of papers at international events of an environmental nature. Why? Because Ontario was in the forefront, and in particular the Ministry of Environment

of Ontario. Now what is happening? You've withdrawn the funds, you've terminated the environmental research grants, which were extremely important over the years.

You have terminated the urban and rural beaches cleanup and restoration programs. I can think of a number of ridings represented by government members that benefited immensely from these programs over the years. They provided some jobs, but more important in the long run, they protected the environment, made Ontario a better place to live and work in, and therefore attracted others to this province with industries and businesses because of the general quality of life that is available in Ontario.

Don't think that doesn't mean something when a company is going to decide business, is going to decide where to locate. The quality of life — that is, what kind of health care system you have, what kind of environmental regulations, legislation and policies you have — has an effect. That's one of the components that is looked at when people decide where they're going to locate.

You have terminated the household hazardous waste programs. Why you'd do that I don't know. You save money in all of these. These are preventive measures. No one ever costed out, when you looked at it originally, the true cost of a landfill site, for instance — how much it would cost to, first of all, get it going; second, to operate it; and third, to look after it in perpetuity. What happened was that there were a lot of problems out there that had to be addressed later on in a curative fashion rather than a preventive fashion. That is not wise, because the cost is invariably larger when you have to cure the problem than prevent it.

I understand that there's no way of totally eliminating risk, but we certainly should try. I thought the household hazardous waste programs were excellent because people could take their materials to the local municipality with some provincial assistance and dispose of those things that they used to either pour down the drain or put into the garbage, again, improving the quality of life, avoiding problems down the line.

You'll reduce funding the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Ontario Energy Board and the Environmental Appeal Board. I'm going to dwell for a moment on one of my favourites, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, because it has to deal with environmental assessment. I know there are some people who don't like the commission. My good friend Mr Murdoch does not like it. However, I must say there are many who do.

I always like to compliment the present minister who, when he was resources development secretary as a member of the cabinet of Bill Davis was responsible for the establishment of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, with the full support of the two opposition parties, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, represented in this House.

My fear now is that I see who they're knocking off the board. They're knocking off the board people who are committed to protecting the Niagara Escarpment, a jewel recognized by the United Nations as a biosphere to be protected surely for all humanity. Yet I know people out there who would like nothing better than to plunk a Holiday Inn right in the middle of the escarpment or to

have these lovely homes for rich people — maybe Conrad Black or somebody like that — on the escarpment. I'm going to tell you that you need people on there to protect the Niagara Escarpment. You need people to protect the environment of the escarpment.

I worry too about how this will be covered, because now that Conrad Black owns 58 newspapers out of 104 in this country, how are the environmental issues going to be dealt with? Who on the editorial board will stand up for the environment when Mr Black is firing people out the door who disagree with him? He buys the newspapers, he has his multinational corporate agenda, and then if you disagree with him out the door you go. Somebody who's in keeping with his views is brought in and they get new columnists who have the same old right-wing sludge — he complained about the left-wing sludge — that we have seen from time to time in those newspapers. This is why it's important that the federal government in this case — I can't blame you people — take the necessary action to ensure that there's competition in that field and that there's not a monopoly in that field.

I'm a very magnanimous person, I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. That's one area that is not your jurisdiction, although I did ask your minister of industry, trade and technology, or economic development — whatever we call him today — Mr Saunderson, about it and he said, "That's the way things are; people must downsize and we must do all these things," and he didn't seem to worry too much about it. He's reflecting government policy. He'll be applauding because now Conrad will be having his views, which are similar to many of yours, permeating his newspapers throughout. The independent, objective, progressive views that used to be in some of those newspapers on environmental issues, for instance, will disappear.

What else have you done? You've cut the conservation authority funding by 70%. Many old Tories used to sit on those boards, I'll tell you. They were great wardens and reeves and people like that and they were supportive of the environment. They sat on the conservation authorities, and I sat and applauded them. When I was on municipal council, I said, "Isn't it nice to see these Conservatives really living up to the word 'conserve'?"

What have you done now? You've just yanked the funding out; 70% of the funding gone. Now they have to start peddling this environmentally sensitive land, probably to rich people who want to build houses in very nice scenic places or developments when this should be kept for all the people in this province, regardless of their income and background, in perpetuity.

You have terminated a program aimed at preserving the province's fruit lands. On many occasions in this House I have spoken about the importance of the farm land in the Niagara region and in particular the fruit lands that are from Hamilton to almost Niagara Falls. Some of the best soils are available there. Certainly second — there's a combination; it's not just the good soils — are the climatic conditions that exist there. It is a fact that on average there are 27 or 28 more growing days at the bottom of the escarpment as compared to the top of the escarpment. That allows for the growing of product that

is not able to be grown in other places. Along with the good soils, this is a real asset.

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The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs — rural development, whatever it's called now — has not been quick to acquiesce to those who are demanding almost unlimited severances in the Niagara region. I want to compliment him on that. There's a lot of pressure on him, don't worry, to start granting severances which are called economic severances. I well understand the situation facing those people who are on the farms. I want to support them. I want us to promote the foods that we sell in this province, to do everything we can, because I'm prepared to see that economic support for those individuals. That is land that should be retained for agricultural purposes for many years to come.

I don't consider progress to be paving everything from Toronto to Fort Erie. There are some people who think that is progress. There are some people in municipalities who think that until you've got every last centimetre of land paved, somehow you haven't attained the ultimate of progress.

One high use of land, and you people who come from the agricultural areas I'm sure know this, is the agricultural use of the land. We tend to underestimate the importance of the agricultural industry to this province. I want to make sure that doesn't happen. I'm sorry the government has terminated a program which was established by the previous government to do with conservation easements, to assist people to stay on that land and still be productive and still make it viable. That was not something I wanted to see happen; on the other hand, I want to be fair both ways, I want to compliment the minister on not acquiescing to the great demand now, as a result, for economic land severances.

You have revoked Bill 163 measures which protect the environment and the planning process such as speeding up the development of agricultural land. I dealt with that a little earlier and I won't go back into that. You have permitted contaminated soil to be used as cover at landfills. Some people don't like that. It's a tough issue, I know, because there's the definition of what's a contaminated soil. Even scientists, I suppose, will disagree on this. You have to develop those standards and live up to those standards, and that's always going to be a difficult issue for people to deal with in terms of landfills. You are considering eliminating 80 regulations protecting the environment.

I listen to people — I've heard the Republicans in the United States say it many times. I know my friend from Rexdale admires the Republican Party in the United States, the Newt Gingrich crew that are in the House in the US, and I know he would applaud many of their measures. They are the people who talk about — it's glib to say it — "Let's get rid of all those regulations."

It sounds good until you start looking at the regulations you're going to eliminate. Some of them you can toss out the window. They don't matter any more because we're now in 1996. There may have been some old regulations that simply do not apply. Nobody objects to getting rid of those. Every government should be reviewing those all the time and eliminating them. But there are many out

there that are simply a nuisance to the development community because it makes them take a little longer or perhaps a few more precautions. I know when they go to the Tory fund-raiser they will whisper in your ear: "Oh, this is too much trouble for us. You know, we could move much more quickly if you let us do this or that."

But a lot of these regulations you have in effect have a very good reason for being there, and that is to protect the environment. You don't let people simply pour oil down some drain the way it might have been many years ago or allow people to dispose of certain items that are borderline hazardous in certain ways, or the weigh-bill system. These are all regulations which were developed because there were problems that had arisen that people of wisdom and perception had spotted and decided to deal with. That's my concern: that you're going to be throwing out those regulations simply because of the mantra, simply because of the ideology, simply because of the checklist you have that you must get rid of so many regulations because it will please many of the people who have voted for you.

You have refused to permit the passage of the city of Toronto's clean air bylaw, which I thought was quite progressive, a bylaw dealing with trying to clean up the smog that exists in a major city because you have so many vehicles in a major city. They were prepared to move forward with it. They were prepared to take responsibility for it. What happened? The Ministry of Environment said no. Somebody obviously got not to the minister, not to the members; I know who they have to get to. They got to the Premier's office. You have to call the Premier's office. You have to call the ideologues who run the government. You don't call the Tory members, because they're secondary, unfortunately. I wish you weren't. You know I've spoken many times on your behalf in this House, trying to increase the powers you have.

I have a note that says I'm allowed to speak for a longer period of time. I know that will certainly intrigue many of you people.

So what else have you done? You've fired environmentalists from the Hydro board of directors. Now, am I suggesting everybody on the board of directors of Ontario Hydro should be an environmentalist? No. I hope they all have the environment in mind, but I don't think you have to have 10 people from Greenpeace on the board of Hydro. But I hope you have some. I hope you have a variety. I hope you have a variety of views there so that all views are canvassed and considered. Ultimately, Hydro and the Minister of Energy, addressing his concerns to Hydro, will make the ultimate decisions, and there's nothing wrong with that. You are elected politically to do so and that is a mandate you get from the people. But I think when you start removing people who simply have a difference of view from what you might have, you do a disservice to that board or to the people of this province. So I hope when you're considering further appointments, you will consider people from the environmental movement as at least having some positions on the Hydro board. I'm not suggesting that they hold all the positions by any means.

You have exempted the Ministry of Finance from the Environmental Bill of Rights. As soon as you start

exempting ministries from things, it's not good. The private sector will say: "You people in government are great talkers. You impose a lot on us. But when it comes to imposing the same provisions on government, you're a little shy."

I can remember, when we passed in 1986 some very substantial increases in penalties to polluters, the chagrin with which some of my colleagues read in the *Globe and Mail* the next day, "Under sweeping new provisions under the Environmental Protection Act, sweeping new penalties being introduced by the government, corporation presidents and cabinet ministers could go to jail," or something of that nature. Well, the first didn't entirely perturb them if they were indeed guilty, but when they saw "cabinet ministers," they were a bit beside themselves. That's because we removed a significant clause that used to be in there previous to that under the old Conservative government, and that was, "This act does not apply to the crown."

I thought that was unfair. I thought governments should live up to the same obligations and the same provisions under the Environmental Protection Act, the Environmental Assessment Act or any of the other acts in the environmental field as people in the private sector. I think most people agree with that. But there was some consternation in government and I see now that you have exempted the Ministry of Finance from the Environmental Bill of Rights, which I think is a step backwards.

You are proposing reducing wetlands areas where you restrict development. The wetlands are disappearing quickly, particularly in urban areas, and it's very important to have them. I've seen many of them; we've all seen them in our communities. I've been through the city of Guelph and they've had some significant wetland areas and nice park areas that I have seen in the midst of that community, and other communities. I think it's important to retain those. There is a scientist in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Dr Lemon, who is involved in using wetlands and marshes for the purpose of cleansing waste water, using a new method out there that now people are beginning to look at in various jurisdictions.

So wetlands serve a purpose. They maintain much of the wildlife that we've always wanted to have around us, and at the same time have helped the general environment in which we live. I become concerned when you're prepared to see wetlands used up.

1650

You are permitting the sale of environmentally sensitive lands protected by conservation authorities. Again, that's the numbers crunch. They can't afford to keep them any more so they have to sell them off, and they were to be for the protection of everybody. I know, as I say, they are nice areas to build on. If you have enough money and enough connections, I suppose, and you can get the land rezoned, I guess that's nice to be able to have. But I happen to believe, as I think many people in this province do, that those environmentally sensitive lands under the auspices of conservation authorities should be retained.

You have reduced environmental regulations on the mining industry. That was under Bill 26 you managed to sneak that in. Bill 26 was that massive bully bill, as we

call it in the opposition — even people in the newspapers called it a bully bill — that gave unprecedented new powers to the cabinet and to unelected officials. The members will well remember that I said at the time this was an excuse for the Premier's office — I say that generically as opposed to perhaps politically — to take more power from the elected members, because all they want from government backbenchers is for you to applaud at the right time, to laugh at the Premier's jokes and to go out and give the message on what your government is all about. When Bill 26 came in, that took away some of those powers, and I was chagrined by that, to say the least.

But that is where the mining industry had its regulations eased. You know, when a mine is completed — not only when it's operating, but when it is completed — there is perpetual care which is required because the tailings that result from the mining process can be very detrimental to the environment if not dealt with appropriately.

You have removed legislated restrictions on the development of public lands, again to the detriment of the general population, and generally have moved in a backward direction on the environment.

This bill is in the context of all of these things you have done. The bill itself, as I mentioned, will have some support in some areas. It will have some, let me say, less than enthusiastic support in other areas, because the minister now has sweeping new powers. Oh, when you're a minister, you like to have that. I'm not convinced it's healthy for democracy, but these are sweeping new powers.

It is the minister's sole discretion over approving the terms of reference, designating which issues can be sent to the Environmental Assessment Board, and the time allotment for board review. Previously, only the full cabinet could grant exemptions to environmental assessments or overturn EA board decisions. Now the minister has complete authority for both actions. Not only does that take the power away from the backbenchers, but even members of the cabinet now who might have a different view are not allowed to express that particular view, because the minister has that sole power. I don't think that's healthy for democracy. It's always good to have input from other cabinet ministers, and as a former environment minister, I can tell you I wasn't always enthusiastic about some of the input I had from other ministers, but I thought the process as a whole was better when I was allowed to explain to them our position and have the input from those ministers. That was very good.

At present there are no terms of reference for a project and the minister does not have the power to assign only specific issues or a set time frame to the EA board. New issues can be raised by the public at any time during the current EA process. That's because sometimes people don't think of a situation or a problem until well into the process. Apparently you're going to prevent them from having that considered.

The minister, with cabinet approval, has always had the right to approve an EA document without it going to the EA board for hearings. That's always been there. Then, as I've mentioned to many people who don't like

the environmental assessment process, most environmental assessments never go to a hearing board, never do, because the concerns are handled through the consultative process, with objectors and with other interested observers, and so it moves through quickly, or expeditiously. It's only where there are major contentious issues that there have been significant hearings that have taken place.

You have new landfill and site decontamination standards. The minister also has introduced proposed new minimum standards for landfill sites and for soil cleanup, and while these standards will allow both sides of the EA process to know what their minimum requirements are, environmental groups are very concerned that the minister will use these standards as an excuse to exempt many more projects, especially landfill sites, from EA hearings.

Anybody who knows of the Pauzé site up in the Simcoe area will know what I mean when I say that it's important to look at the site of a landfill and all conditions around it before proceeding, and we may see a weakening of that process under the provisions of this bill.

There are also concerns that these will be province-wide standards, whereas many landfill sites face unique water and soil issues and the minister has allowed only 30 days for the public to respond to these new standards. That really means hiring professionals. That really means that you are going to say, "You, as the public, can't do your own research in 30 days; you're going to have to hire somebody to do a very quick assessment." I become concerned about that, that they don't more than 30 days to respond to the new standards that are available, because not everybody's an expert in the field.

I forgot something else you did. You also removed intervenor funding. Intervenor funding was designed to level the playing field. You had the rich developer come in with —

Mr Hastings: Conrad.

Mr Bradley: I don't think he's a developer. The rich developer would come in — and I know Hansard has noted that the member from Rexdale has suggested Conrad is a rich developer. I wasn't aware of that. The rich developer can come in with all kinds of resources, hire the best of lawyers, the high-priced lawyers, hire the best of scientists, engineers, technical people, and make a presentation, while the other side has to have a bake sale and a garage sale to raise funds to hire perhaps a new lawyer coming out of the system. That is not equal.

So I believe that you have to have a levelling of the playing field. The intervenor funding project allowed that to happen, because they were protecting the environment.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: If you simply want to turn it over to the developers, as the interjection from the member from Rexdale suggests, that somehow you will simply turn this whole process over to the developers and rely on their goodwill, I don't think that is possible to do. That's why I think the government is moving in the wrong direction with this provision of the bill.

You have harmonization with federal EA legislation. This bill allows the minister the freedom to allow a project to proceed through another jurisdiction's EA

process — another province, for instance, or the federal government — and bypass the Ontario process. Although this system will discourage needless repetition and waste, environmental groups are concerned that the federal EA process, in particular, is not as stringent as that in Ontario. After we're finished with this government, the groups may change their mind, but the fact is this province has established already a very onerous and complete environmental assessment process. While I agree with having a combined hearing, for instance with the federal government in certain situations, I don't believe we should turn it over to the federal government holus-bolus.

There are the interest groups. In general the industry groups such as the Ontario Waste Management Association support the proposed changes. While environmental groups, like the Canadian Environmental Law Association, support the mediation, review deadlines and mandatory public consultation provisions, they're concerned about the level of power given to the minister. Essentially they don't trust the minister to use his new powers in the best interests of the environment.

1700

I remember getting a letter from the Ontario Waste Management Association, I think it was, right after the election and obviously they didn't check which party they were sending it to. They made several disparaging remarks about previous governments, and I can understand that. If I were from the waste management association and had had these onerous regulations placed on me, this tough legislation to deal with, the difficult and I think wise penalties against those who violated the law, I tell you, I wouldn't be happy with the previous government.

I think they put "the last 10 years." The letters to the Liberals were supposed to be "the last five years," but somehow I got one that said "10 years" and it had to be corrected. It's even more interesting when I get the ones that go to the Tory members, because then you really find out what these groups think of other political parties, and I'm sure you get the same thing from time to time — it goes to the wrong person — and it's always rather enlightening. But I can understand the Ontario Waste Management Association. Hey, they're going to be in favour of this. They'll love you. I think they'll be at the fund-raisers. I hope they go to Rexdale because we need to build up the funds in the Rexdale riding.

So we recognize —

Mr Hastings: At the St Catharines Club.

Mr Bradley: There is a St Catharines Club. I should tell the member for Rexdale there is a St Catharines Club. I do not belong to it. I have been in it from time to time at the invitation of others, because I represent and meet with all of the people in my constituency, all of the people. So when the Conservatives invite me to the St Catharines Club, I do occasionally walk into the place; some very nice people in there. I don't think I would have majority support among the members, however. Somehow I think it would be distinctly minority support in that place, but it certainly doesn't match the Albany Club. But I'm off topic and the Speaker has been very kind and tolerant, as he always is in these debates, and I want to compliment him on that.

We in the opposition recognize that the existing EA process needs to be modified. That's fine; nothing wrong with that. We would agree with that. Many environmental assessment hearings were taking too long and were too expensive. I saw some of those happen. EA reform, however, cannot come at the expense of full public scrutiny and environmental protection.

There was somebody who suggested — I'm going to say a former member of the Environmental Assessment Board because if I said a present one, the person might be in trouble — that if only you could get the lawyers out of there, you would have a lot faster hearing. I don't know that. I can't say that personally, but I'm told that there was a lot of niggling over minor issues sometimes, procedural issues. I think where the government can make a difference is if you have a hearing where you say: "Okay, what are the issues? Let's deal with those, let's not get caught up in procedure, let's not get caught up in very tiny, time-consuming issues that lawyers can find to get caught up in."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The Minister of Municipal Affairs is going to listen in the back room to what I'm saying now.

So I understand that, and I don't want to sound as though — I know you've been told by the Premier's office to say the opposition are against change, because, you see, there's a perception out there the public wants change. So all you do is, you listen to two or three members and you say, "Ah, that's what the Premier's office is saying." That's what's in the notes that come out to you. So we're not opposed to change; we just think that change should continue to protect the environment.

The bill takes away far too many powers from the Environmental Assessment Board and grants the minister sweeping discretionary powers over environmentally significant projects. By tying the hands of Environmental Assessment Board members, the board is now severely limited in its ability to provide objective, independent advice on environmental issues. Given the Tories' record, we do not trust this government to use its powers in the best interests of Ontario's environment. This is clearly the case when we see the lack of initiatives that are forthcoming from this government.

Although we support the inclusion of mandatory public consultation on EA documents, the government has eliminated intervenor funding. That means that few groups will have the resources to participate in the EA process. So once again we divide Ontario into the rich and the not-rich, and the rich shall prevail in Mike Harris's Ontario. That's exactly what happens. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale understands that and he nods over there, and I assume he's nodding in agreement and not nodding off during my speech.

The bill gives more responsibility to the Ministry of Environment and Energy environmental assessment branch staff. At the same time, the minister is decimating, it says, the ministry. I guess that would mean cutting it into 10. I would say he is annihilating the ministry. Fifteen people have recently been laid off from the branch and the branch's resources are already overstretched.

You can't be unfair to the civil service. You can't say to them: "Well, we've got to move these things much more quickly, but guess what? We're turfing 15 people out the door," and maybe more. These briefing notes are old so it may be even more people are out the door now. If you're going to make these changes, you've got to have the appropriate staff available to deal with those changes.

I look at this piece of legislation and say while it is not revolutionary, it certainly does not go as far as some in the Reform Party would like, but it nevertheless is moving down the path of the weakening of environmental protection in this province in some of its aspects — not all, but some of its aspects.

I hope the government will listen to those who are advising it that it's getting a bad environmental reputation. I read somewhere where they had some advice from — I don't know whether it was a consultant or polls or something — and there were Tories now feeling a bit concerned that they were going to be perceived as being weak on the environment. Even people who would agree with them in other areas would say, "But on the environment we think you're weak."

I expect there's going to be a couple of high-profile initiatives coming from the Minister of Environment and Energy which will give the appearance of major environmental aggressiveness on the part of the government when indeed the government will be stepping backward.

My good friend the member for Mississauga South was in the House this afternoon listening in rapt attention to my remarks, a former critic and I must say a good critic in the field of the environment, I always thought, very personally concerned about the issues affecting her riding and other issues in the province.

She must be disappointed in the direction that the government is moving. I don't expect her to say so because she's a member of the government caucus, she's a good team member, but I remember what she used to say in this House and how she was aggressive. She was wondering, "Could we go further in reducing acid rain in this province?" I agree with her. She was on a committee that helped me out. I said to the committee: "Let's get a good report in. Let's get a strong report in." When we were reducing by two thirds the sulphur dioxide emissions in this province, a truly revolutionary new program, she wanted the government to look even further for reductions and I agreed with her at that time.

But somehow I have not seen the government moving in that direction. In fact, I understand that they are casting out people in the department that used to be responsible for acid rain. I think they've dismantled that aspect of the Ministry of Environment and Energy and thrown it in together with another general branch and fired some world-renowned scientists who are expert in the field.

I think we have reason to be pessimistic. I'm a member of the Optimist Club. I like to be optimistic. But I am pessimistic on this occasion about the direction in which this government is moving on the environment. I only hope that government will change.

My friend the member for Hamilton Centre is eager to participate in this debate and I want to give him ample time today to canvass the various issues that are related

to this legislation, because I know he too would share many of the concerns that I've expressed.

1710

So to the members of the government caucus, I urge you to put the pressure, all of you who are raving environmentalists, on the cabinet and particularly on those in the Premier's office, who control everything, to increase your environmental awareness, your environmental initiatives, your environmental aggressiveness and show that it is truly a non-partisan issue, that even Conservatives who are bent on revolutionary change to help big business and the international-multinational corporations in this province, that even you are able to protect the environment.

I know you may not get rave reviews in Southam News or in Hollinger where Conrad Black will be looking carefully at the editorials that are written. If you come forward with a new initiative that's going to protect the environment and might impose some restrictions on business, Conrad will ensure that those who are writing the editorials will not be kind to you, but I can tell you, I will be kind to you in opposition, for what that's worth, and I'm sure the majority of people in this province will be kind to you even if the Black empire will not be. The Hollinger-Southam empire that he has built will not be kind in its assessment of this government. But you will know that you will be on the side of virtue. You may have to wait for your reward in heaven, but heaven knows, you'll deserve that reward if you make those changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr Galt: Thank you for your presentation: certainly interesting and enjoyable. There is an area I would like to clarify with you for a little more understanding of what the environmental bill, Bill 76, was all about. You're quite aware of many of the problems we've had in going through environmental assessment for landfill sites. The proponent would go through the whole exercise and get down to the end and somebody would come along and say, "Did you look at this alternative?" and they'd have to start all over again. Millions of dollars have been spent as a result of that kind of activity, and also many years — like the one in Guelph, some 10 years, and some of them, while we were on the road, were telling us it was up to 14 and 15 years — and they still didn't end up with a landfill site.

What we're doing with this bill is putting up front the terms of reference identifying what needs to be examined in the environmental assessment evaluation. We also have enshrined that there will be public consultation in designing these terms of reference and then the public will also be involved in actually working through the environmental assessment. So it's all up front and everybody knows what's to be carried out, what has to be done. Yes, somebody may come up with some alternative down the road, but surely to goodness, as we work through in a year, most of those ideas will be up front and there won't be that much new research that comes up during that year while they're working through the environmental assessment.

We think it's fair, it's equitable and it should work for the proponent, as well as for the public and the general public interest. That was really the basis and the purpose of this whole bill, to get things up front, understandable, clear and to be able to work it out.

You made reference to participant funding, and the funding can also be involved in this. That can be part of the proposal of the proponent or part of the objection of the public if they feel there should be some funding in there, and the proponent can provide it and it can be agreed to by the minister. It really comes down to what the minister's provided to sign off on and have up front in those terms of reference.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I too listened intently to the remarks by the member for St Catharines, and why not? We have the longest-serving authority, a member of the party council: five years, four months and three days of consistent care, of bettering the environment in which we work, in which we live. I take his words, his words of wisdom indeed, at par value. That's the longest-standing tenure indeed.

The members opposite have not been too critical, for they too will readily acquiesce that when the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley, grants us the pleasure of an audience when it comes to this most important subject matter — that is, of the environment — we shall listen and learn indeed.

My experience is far more humble, but I recall vividly that in the great riding of Lake Nipigon — and you know we're resource-based, forestry and mining. While most players were good corporate citizens, it's been our experience that in far too many cases, alas, people have to be dragged in kicking and screaming for the bottom line. The profit margin was consistently more seductive than a good environment for their fellow citizens to live in.

So we say to the government, beware, be careful, be on your guard. You have the strength, the mandate, the authority to monitor.

I want to conclude by again thanking the member for St Catharines for his most insightful remarks.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to take this two-minute opportunity to speak to the traditions of this place and the importance of the traditions to our way of government and to our system here, and to the importance of maintaining and respecting the time-honoured traditions of this place; and my concern that the remarks of my friend from St Catharines failed to honour one of the most significant traditions of this place, and my deep concern for the possible consequences of this failure to adhere to the traditions of this place.

It is, after all, the traditions our system is based on. It is the traditions of this place that retain our democratic system, that separate our form of government from other forms of government that we find elsewhere in the world in less happy societies, less happy communities. It is the respect for tradition that is important to all of us and vital to the smooth operation of our parliamentary system in this province, and I'm very concerned that one of the traditions has been lost in this chamber this afternoon.

Now, some of the traditions were respected. When my friend from St Catharines spoke, he did honour his

tradition of speaking approvingly of past Tory governments. This is good. This is important. We've come to expect this, and it's important that that tradition be maintained and respected.

It's also traditional that my friend from St Catharines speaks of Conrad Black whenever he speaks of our current government, somehow works Conrad Black into the commentary and suggests that Conrad Black is pulling the strings behind the scenes somehow and running things, deviously or otherwise.

But there's a very important tradition that was entirely neglected and abrogated, and that is to mention the popping of champagne corks at the Albany Club. Now, champagne was mentioned, but it was the clinking of glasses. I deliberately reminded my friend to mention the Albany Club. He failed to do so, and I'm deeply distressed at that.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Durham Centre.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Mr Speaker, I'm very flattered. Durham Centre is Jim Flaherty, my good friend. However, I'm from Durham East.

It's a pleasure to participate briefly on Bill 76, the Environmental Assessment and Consolidated Improvement Act, 1996. I want to compliment not only Minister Sterling and the previous minister. Minister Elliott, for being so well qualified to comment and to make structural changes, but also, more importantly, Dr Doug Galt from Northumberland. He has all the skills of a community leader and plenty of background in that area, as a previous warden, dealing with municipal and planning issues. Mr Bradley made that point, that much of the environment comes under the realm of planning.

I want to take a couple of minutes and get more specific, that the importance of the environment is very, very central to this government's platform. Really, what we're doing here is trying to make the process work. We're all very much aware of Bill 143 and the absolute waste even in Bill 163, the planning bill, by the previous government, how it really created nothing but the whole intervenor funding acquiescence to process, but no solutions, no outcomes.

1720

In my view, it's very clear that our record is that we are going to protect the environment. We'll also get rid of the waste, the waste that the process itself created. I really think that by funnelling or channelling up front in the whole process of the EA hearings, anyone who opposes the proponent has the right to appeal before it's even considered in the public forum.

I just want to conclude my remarks: There have been extensive public hearings. I believe the essential elements of this particular debate are to protect the environment and to protect the process so that indeed we end up with a solution at the end of expense. They spent over \$100 million under Bill 143 trying to find a dump site. At the end of the day they spent the money and had no site. We will find solutions.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I'd like to thank the members for Northumberland, Lake Nipigon, York East and Durham

East for their contributions. I happen to think, by the way, that this opportunity to respond to speakers is a good provision within our rules. It wasn't always there and I think it makes it much more meaningful.

First of all, I want to thank the member for Lake Nipigon for the very kind words that were forthcoming from him, because I know on some occasions when I was Minister of Environment I wasn't always the most popular person in Terrace Bay or other parts of Lake Nipigon when there were major issues to be confronted. He understood the circumstances facing that.

I appreciate that the parliamentary assistant has provided some clarification. He identifies some genuine problems. I want to tell him that I'm glad he raises some of those issues, or other issues on the other side, but those were some problems that I think concerned a lot of people. The very lengthy process that ultimately would not produce a result, sometimes the fault of proponents, sometimes just the fault of the system; we want to see that rectified, and I take at his word the fact that this is what the government wants to do. I appreciate that clarification.

My friend the member for Durham East has said that the government has as its central concern the environment. I hope that is the case, because I've said on many occasions that indeed it's something that goes beyond political considerations. I hope that's the case and I encourage members to do that.

The member for York East is very kind. I was trying to avoid a reference to the Albany Club because I have on occasion been not kind to it. I've never been in the Albany Club, but my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs was kind enough to provide me with a bottle of Albany Club wine because I mention it so much. So I will enjoy some of the flavour of the Albany Club, if never enter its doors.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 49, An Act to improve the Employment Standards Act / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à améliorer la Loi sur les normes d'emploi

Bill 70, An Act to provide Co-operative Education and Film Industry Tax Credits, to create Economic Growth, to implement other measures contained in the 1996 Budget and to amend certain Acts administered by the Minister of Finance / Projet de loi 70, Loi créant des crédits d'impôt pour l'éducation coopérative et l'industrie cinématographique, favorisant la croissance économique, mettant en oeuvre d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1996 et modifiant des lois dont l'application relève du ministre des Finances

Bill 79, An Act to improve Ontario's court system, to respond to concerns raised by charities and their volun-

teers and to improve various statutes relating to the administration of justice / Projet de loi 79, Loi visant à améliorer le système judiciaire de l'Ontario, à répondre aux préoccupations exprimées par les oeuvres de bienfaisance et leurs bénévoles, et à améliorer diverses lois relatives à l'administration de la justice.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 AMÉLIORANT LE PROCESSUS D'ÉVALUATION ENVIRONNEMENTALE ET DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE (continued)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I would like to begin by first asking the same consideration for our party that the government was given on this debate; that is, consent to divide the opening time between myself and the member for Riverdale.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent? It is agreed.

Mr Christopherson: First of all, I found it quite interesting to listen to some of the comments of the member for Durham East in particular. It made me think of what this is all about, because there are two parts to this: One is the overall protection of our environment, which is supposed to be the top priority of the Ministry of Environment and Energy; and also you have the need, in terms of the process changes you've made here, to ensure that those communities in whose backyard a dump may go have a fair and democratic process so that if they have concerns — and they usually do — they would be honestly and honourably and fairly dealt with up front.

It was interesting to listen to the member talk about the money that was spent by the previous government in pursuit of a process that was expensive and timely, but one of the priorities in that process was to ensure that communities and everyone involved had an opportunity to be heard.

I would like, just for the record, to ask the members of the government back benches — those who raise their hand, I will mention you so that it's there for the record — how many of you, just to save us a whole lot of time, would like to offer on behalf of your constituents to have a dump? Who would like to offer up your riding and offer on behalf of your constituents a dump? Perhaps if you did that now, we could save all the money in the world and just go straight there. Maybe I'll give the members an opportunity to raise their hands. Who wants to invite and welcome a dump into their backyard and make that offer on behalf of their constituents here today? It will save a lot of money. Don't forget, that's what this is all about. It will save a lot of time; that's what this is all about. Again, please put your hand up so that we can let the minister and your constituents know.

It's interesting. I see one of the members going like this. That's sort of the point. Obviously, I didn't expect that anyone would offer up. The point of the matter is that when it comes to dumps there are very few people in the province of Ontario, particularly elected representa-

tives, who are going to stand up and offer their community.

That's why it's so important that there be a proper process and that there be an opportunity for consultation. That's why when we talk about the lack of intervenor funding and the power that's been granted to the minister to waive certain requirements of the process, we raise a very loud and concerned voice; that's the reason.

Any of you who have to face that — and quite frankly, I hope you don't, because it's a terrible thing for a politician to go through, and it's an awful thing for residents and constituents who are honestly and sincerely concerned about their family and their relatives and their community. If there are going to be technological and medical mistakes made, the normal reaction for most people is: "I hope it happens somewhere else. I don't want to wish anyone else ill health or bad luck or, God forbid, for them or their families to be poisoned, but being a responsible parent and a responsible member of my community, I'd just as soon it wasn't here." Of course the problem is that we all feel that way. Everybody has that very human, legitimate concern about where you're going to put a dump or, now that you've legalized them again, an incinerator. People are frightened.

If you as a politician ever have to go through that, for those of you who are not too seasoned yet, you're going to get real experienced real quick, particularly if you're in the government back benches, and now even more so under this law because there are fewer rights for the communities and the citizens you would represent. Believe me, you will be politically dancing from morning till night around that issue, and that issue alone. You will not only have responsibility for speaking on behalf of your constituents; you're going to have to explain to them why there's no longer any intervenor funding, why decisions that used to belong to the whole cabinet can now be made by one person, the minister. You're going to have to answer those questions in addition to the broader questions any politician in that circumstance would have to answer.

I've watched it. I've watched it with my own colleagues when I sat on that side of the House and we had the question of the location of the next dump in this area of the province, and it was quite difficult for those individual members. So for those of you who face that, you have my sympathy on a personal level, and more so because you're going to have to defend why Bill 76 took away rights your community once had in the process that you supported taking away. File that way in the back of your mind when we get to the third-reading vote on Bill 76, because you may indeed rue the day you said, as you are today, that Bill 76 is such a wonderful thing for the people of this province.

1730

Secondly, as I have done with other bills, I want to point out the sheer hypocrisy of the naming of these bills. The politics of this is very simple to understand. First of all, you say that you're going to do one thing. The Minister of Labour, the area I'm responsible for as a critic, does it all the time: stands up and says these glorious goals and ideals that they have as a government,

which sound good. One could never argue with how they sound, but when you get in behind it and see what the legislation is and what they're doing, it tells quite another story. This government has turned this into a science. You truly have.

The second part of this is that we know the name of the bill is being traced along the bottom of the TV screen. An awful lot of people will do channel surfing and may stop for a minute if they recognize one of the ministers or recognize the leaders of the other two parties or a member of their own area. But most people, the majority of the time, would not have a connection with the speaker who's on their feet, as a lot of people won't now as I'm speaking, but they may wait long enough for that trailer to come along the bottom of the screen to see if they're interested. If it says An Act to improve — well, there's a message; I was going to say subliminal but it's not even subliminal, it's rather up front — unless you want to stay tuned and watch the whole debate and listen to both sides of the argument, and not just what the government spin doctors are putting forward, you'd never really understand that is hypocrisy in its finest form, because the bill is nothing of the sort.

You did it with Bill 20. That was one of your previous environmental bills where you again gutted the process. I remind members that I spent five years on my local planning council as an alderman, so I have an understanding of how all that works and I came away from the debate on Bill 20 without any doubt in my mind that you have weakened the protection of the environment under Bill 20, and yet you had the audacity to call it An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment. You did nothing of the sort.

You've gutted the Ministry of Labour, you've attacked rights that people have, that communities have, you've gutted the regulations that have provided protection for the environment, all under the guise of streamlining and cutting red tape. In your eyes, anything that gets a regulation out of the way is an improvement, period, full stop. That's the whole idea.

You've even got one of your little committees running around in your caucus whose sole existence is to cut, as you see it, red tape. Never mind that it may have been there for a very valid reason or that perhaps it needs to be modified but not eliminated; that's not what you've done. You've taken out your meat cleaver, and when you stop long enough in your chopping of funding to all the things that make Ontario a great place, you move over to the regulatory area and you start chopping it up with the same reckless abandon you do when you're trying to find money to pay for your tax cut that your rich friends are going to get richer from. That's exactly what you're doing with the Ministry of Environment and Energy. I defy you to find a credible environmental organization that says you've done anything that improves protection for the environment.

There are an awful lot of groups which, quite frankly, will, regardless of the political stripe of the government of the day, acknowledge when something is an improvement. They maybe go on to say that you should have pushed more here, you could have done a little better here, but they'll give you your due. That's not happening

with this government. Every credible environmental group in this province is on the ceiling. They're on the ceiling; they're beside themselves. They cannot believe that any government in this province would decimate protection to the environment the way you have.

Again we see with Bill 76 the title, Environmental Assessment and Consultation Improvement Act. For those who are only watching for a couple of moments and see the little trail along the TV screen, your hope is that that's the message they get and that they then flip to Oprah or whatever else they're going to watch and think, "Oh, well, all they're doing is debating some improvements to the environment." The fact of the matter is that you aren't; you are taking away more rights and more protection under the guise of streamlining things.

If there's any doubt in the mind of anybody watching this, contact your local environmental group, contact anybody who is involved in the environment at all, and they will give you a litany of things this government has done that is nothing short of an outright attack on the protection so you can take care of your friends. We know why you're doing it. You've got your political debts to pay, you've got to take care of your pals, and a lot of these environmental protections get in the way. The government members don't like that, they don't want to have those problems, so they accommodate with the bills they've brought forward and then, as I've said, have the hypocrisy to put a label on it that says they're actually improving something. It's quite disgusting in the extreme.

Let's talk a bit about what this bill is doing.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Streamlining. It's nice to be on top.

Mr Christopherson: There we are. You hear the government backbenchers howling away: "Streamlining. It's nice to be on top." Of course, if this were a minority government situation — not that it is, and I accept the realities of last June. The fact of the matter is, if you ever did have to try to get any support at all in a minority situation, you wouldn't be able to get this bill even on the floor. So it must feel good to be on top, particularly when you know you're ramming through an agenda that doesn't have the support of the people.

We're also aware of some of the poll numbers. I think it was only a couple of weeks ago that a poll came out that showed that, gee, people are sort of concerned about what this government's agenda might be in terms of the environment. We know the polls are beginning to show there's some real concern about what you're doing with health care. Now we're beginning to see that there's some real concern about what you're doing with education.

If you'll recall, and it's in the Hansard to look at, there were those of us who have been around here a little while — I'm not one of the longest-serving members, but I've been here a while — a number of us who said, "Watch the arrogance, be careful, don't get too cocky, don't get too far out in front of yourself, because in this business popularity can change like that."

Mr Preston: And you know all about it — living proof.

Mr Christopherson: To those who say we know all about, indeed we do, indeed I do, which is why I cautioned you to not be quite so arrogant because you are on

top and you had the poll numbers. To give you some defence, you didn't know any better, because all you knew was the sweet taste of victory. But the fact of the matter is that you cannot do what you have done to the environment and not expect that your poll numbers are going to show that people are getting concerned. You cannot do what you have done to health care and expect that the numbers won't begin to reflect the concern, and you cannot do it without expecting to see the numbers reflect around education cuts, and, I would say, around WCB, around occupational health and safety, all of the things that affect ordinary, middle-class, working families. That is the group of people that loses the most under your agenda.

So I say to you very clearly, as I have before, to those government backbenchers — I mean, the cabinet ministers have got a shot. We saw, with the Liberal change, as my colleague from Lake Nipigon will recall, and we saw here in our own caucus that it is beneficial politically to be a cabinet minister, even though it's tough to be under the gun and it's a very stressful position to be in. There is an opportunity to help raise your profile, and that can help you get re-elected. But you're not all going to get in cabinet.

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So whatever you think you're relying on to get re-elected, I would say to those backbenchers deep in the back benches who will only see the inside of the cabinet room when there's a public tour, you had better start thinking about what you're going to say to people in three or four years when you're knocking on doors, when you can't pick and choose who you're going to talk to, when you can't pick and choose which people are on what side of an issue, like the environment, that you're going to talk to, because you can't hide from the people during an election. When you go consistently hitting people, as you are, on matters that affect their quality of life, as you are doing on Bill 76, you will indeed see the numbers change.

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member across the floor has been speaking on everything except Bill 76. According to standing order 23, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she...directs his or her speech to matters other than" what is the topic. I think he should get on topic.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order, but I was listening carefully to the member's remarks. I find his debate proper.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the fairness of your ruling, sir. I would just say to the parliamentary assistant, what are you afraid of? If you're so worried that I'm saying something that may not directly relate to Bill 76, why are you worried? You're worried because you don't like what I've got to say. Why don't you just sit there with your 80-seat-plus majority and give those of us in the minority an opportunity to have our say?

I'm talking about the environment. I'm talking about Bill 76. I'm talking about the impact on our communities, like mine in Hamilton. And, to your benefit, I'm talking about how you're going to have to weather all this at the end of the day. So I thank you for recognizing the

connection of all that, Speaker, and would tell the government, don't be so worried. You're so cocksure that you know what you're doing, what do you care what we say over here? Just sit back, Mr Parliamentary — pardon me; Dr Parliamentary Assistant. Relax. You don't even have to pay attention. Just relax. Let me have my say.

One of the things about this bill, as I started to say, is that it provides that where there will be federal environmental assessments, Ontario will back away. That's quite consistent with a government that wants to have as little protection as possible. That's why they've changed the law, watered it down. That's why they've gutted the regulations. That's why they've gutted the personnel in the ministry. This allows them a neat little trick where if Ontario's standards were higher, they can just pull out and say, "The feds are involved." They do it under the guise of duplication. They say, "We don't want to have duplication because that's a waste of taxpayers' money." On the surface, just like all of your simplistic little bumper-sticker slogans, it sounds fine. But what is so sinister about it is that in most cases the reality is that the Ontario standards would be tougher, and this allows the government to pull out of that process and let the lower standards at the federal level be the standards that are used to measure whether or not an approval will be given.

That is not the way you protect the environment. You ought to be doing it the other way around. Anybody who cares about the environment would say you don't allow Ontario to step out where our standards are higher. Make it clear that that's the intent and that's the law. That's not what you've done. You've provided another avenue for protection of the environment to be circumvented, and we say to you that's what you've been doing consistently with everything that affects the environmental agenda, or lack of, that you brought forward.

You've again, like we saw in Bill 26, the omnibus bill, the bully bill where you gave yourselves so much power and we saw the health minister get all the power to shut down hospitals and he gave it to the commission — he stood up today and said: "It's the commission. It's the law and you've got to respect the law. They're the ones." Hell, he wrote the law; he appointed the players there. We said that this was about shifting power away from this Legislature and accountability away from the minister, and that's exactly what you're doing here.

Decisions where there are exemptions that can only be made by a full cabinet can now be given at the stroke of a pen by a minister, period. Full cabinet not required; only the minister. Sounds familiar. It's the whole concentration of power away from the public arena, away from people who are accountable, into a single source, in this case the minister. The whim of the minister of the day, and you've already had two, will decide whether or not an exemption is given. I want to say again, if that's your community and your backyard and your kids, you wouldn't take too kindly to that kind of change in the law. You would at least expect you would maintain a full cabinet debate and full cabinet responsibility and accountability on the decision.

I want to end my comments because my colleague from Riverdale, who has had much greater experience

than I in this area and is currently our critic, has now had a chance to return to the House, having served in the Speaker's chair and taken other responsibilities. I want to give her that opportunity to speak.

But I want to say in closing that the whole idea, from any level, that you have improved the consultation process and the ability of communities to be involved is absolutely and thoroughly negated by your withdrawing intervenor funding. Remember, that wasn't taxpayer money; it was paid for by the applicant. That gave communities an opportunity to hire the kind of scientific evidence that's needed to make their case, as one does in a democracy — two cases — as one would do for medical evidence, to hire geographers and all of the other experts that you need to make the kind of decision in a highly technical, complex world like we now have today.

You have completely negated the ability of community groups because that funding's not there. On the one hand, you've got a huge corporation with access to millions of dollars making the case, because obviously they're planning to make some money at it and that's the way the system works. But on the other side, you're supposed to have an equal chance for communities to have a say. You can't do that by having a bake sale. You can't do that by passing the hat at a community meeting of 50 people. You just can't do it. That legislation and that funding was in place to balance the scales so there could be a fair and honest discussion, debate, and process between, as close as you can get, two equals. You have tipped that so far that that alone denies any ability for this government to say you've made an improvement in consultation, an improvement in community involvement.

I end my speech the way I began it, and that is that if any one of you has to go through a proposal for a dump in your riding, I only ask that you re-read these Hansards, not just my comments but your own, because you will have to defend them. You will have to defend your community and you will have to defend the rights they no longer have because you're going to stand up on third reading and support Bill 76, which is taking away many of those community rights that those people are entitled to.

Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm pleased to be able to participate in the third reading of this bill. I have a hard time even mentioning the title because once again, I will say, and very carefully say it, the title of the bill, like all of the environmental bills I have seen, does not represent what is actually in the bill. On the contrary, this bill says An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act.

It sounds like a good title, and what I have to say to the members here today is that the title does not reflect what is in this bill. I again congratulate the government members or whoever their spin doctor is who is able to come up with these great titles for these devastating bills. It's really quite incredible work.

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The first thing I'm going to say today in the few minutes I have is that Mike Harris is breaking his

promise on dump sites. The government members can argue till they're blue in the face, which I know they will, which they've said and will continue to do, that that isn't so.

Members on the committee, the parliamentary assistant and others, were told by members of the public who came to speak to the committee, when asked, in their view, "Given what you know about this bill and what Mike Harris said in the House when asked the question, 'Will you guarantee full environmental assessment on any landfills in Ontario?' Mike Harris said: 'Yes, I do. In spite of the fact that we felt the previous government was proceeding in error with their megadump proposal, at least they were having full environmental assessment, not trying to short-circuit the process, not going without any full environmental assessment'" —

The key quote, actually, in the question is, "Yes, I do." You cannot be any more categorical than, "Yes, I do." That's what Mike Harris said.

Then what happened is that the then minister went away and came forward with this bill we have in front of us today for third reading. I was shocked to see, when I went through the bill, that indeed Mike Harris's promise, a fundamental promise to the people of Ontario that there would be full environmental assessment hearings for landfills in Ontario, would be fundamentally broken. The government continues to argue about this, but I am going to tell you why it is being broken.

Under the act, as it is now — and let me say here that the Environmental Assessment Act is, I would say and many others agree, the most important environmental planning statute in Ontario. At the heart of EA, what makes environmental assessment what it is and so comprehensive and so thorough, is the consideration of alternatives, to have to look at need for the undertaking, to look at alternative sites and to take all the environmental impacts into consideration.

That is the heart and soul of environmental assessment. This bill allows those key elements of environmental assessment to be negotiated off the table during the setting of the terms of reference. What that means is that when people sit down at the very beginning of the process and start scoping out the entire process for the EA — and that's when it will all happen, it will happen at that time. And may I say here that the original bill, although it says "improving public consultation," froze the public out of the process of the setting of the terms of reference. We were absolutely astounded and amazed that the government could come forward and say: "We're improving public consultation. By the way, we're changing the very fundamental way the act works, but the public won't be involved in this scoping."

I am happy to say that there was one, but only one, significant amendment made by the government.

Mr Christopherson: Just one?

Ms Churley: There were others, but just one significant one made by the government; that is, they did say they would allow "interested parties" — whatever that means; we're not totally sure, as it hasn't been totally defined — to be involved up front in the scoping of EA under the setting of the terms of reference.

They did that because not only did the environmental groups demand that but, interestingly enough, a lot of the

industries which came forward, although they often agreed with most parts of the bill, for obvious reasons — as an aside, it was quite interesting that there was a line right down the middle in terms of who supported it and who didn't — even some of the industries knew this was a fundamental flaw. They know from long experience that if they don't consult up front with the public and those who are going to be affected, they're going to be in trouble and they're not going to get anywhere anyway.

I would say that most industries out there know that and do consult. Although I'm clearly happy to see now and I do give the government credit for enshrining public consultation into the bill, I will say as well that it was a very easy step to take. I've had long years of environmental assessment, indirectly in a variety of ways and once directly. De facto, these people consult with the public, because if they don't, they know they're stalled forever, that they have to figure out where the problems are and try to come to some agreements on things. So de facto it happens.

It's nice that it's in there. I'm glad to see it there, but it was an easy thing to put in and then pretend, wrap your arms around that and say, "See, we're improving public consultation," when in fact throughout the entire bill public consultation is curtailed in all kinds of areas. Later, I will point to some of those areas where public consultation is actually curtailed, not improved.

But the problem with the bill — there are many problems, and I know my colleague went into some of them and I did on second reading. But to me, I suppose, out of all of them, the allowing to scope off the key elements of EA is perhaps the most important one. In a way, although I was happy to see the amendment allowing the public to participate in the setting of the terms of reference, it's a little bit of a red herring. I'm glad it's there and I'm sure the public is really glad, but the fact is, you can still, under this bill, scope these things off the table.

Interestingly enough, what that means is that the government is not going to be able to achieve its timetable. You're going to have a situation where every single EA is going to be different; the same rules won't apply. You may say, and I've heard government members say, "Well, that's the way it should be, that different projects demand different things and sometimes you don't have to look at all these things." But again, Mr Harris, the Premier of this province, promised that there would be full environmental assessment hearings for landfill in this province, and that promise has been broken.

I want to tell you that in terms of public consultation, this bill does not improve it; it curtails it. But secondary to that is that the Intervenor Funding Project Act — and I see the Attorney General is here; I know that's in his ministry — has come to an end. Our government knew as well that that was going to come to an end and we were looking at alternatives when it ran out. What this government has done is just stopped it. There's no more intervenor funding. The government members did not accept my amendment to find another way to provide intervenor funding in a way that would not cost the government a red cent, that you enshrine in the law some kind of system where the proponent has to pay some intervenor funding up front. The government said, "There can be

money awarded at the end of the process." Well, that's very risky.

Supposing, Mr Speaker, in Perth you had a threat of a huge landfill or an incinerator and a lot of your constituents were very, very upset about it. They don't have a lot of money and they want to fight back, want to go through a very complex, complicated environmental assessment process where the proponent has a ton of money to hire the best lawyers, the best scientists, the best experts to give their version of the story. Your residents, your constituents, are not going to be able to raise very much money through a bake sale, and these things, whether you like it or not, are very costly, because a landfill and complicated technical undertakings tend to get very complicated in hearings.

That is a fact, and if you have a citizens group in your riding that doesn't have enough money to go into an environmental assessment with an expert who says: "Look, we have all these credentials so we can match the credentials from the proponent. We've looked at the implications for groundwater contamination here and we can prove to you that there could be or will be serious problems with our drinking water down the road" — Mr Speaker, I'm sure you would agree with me that you would like assurances that there was a possibility your constituents would at least have that option.

Mr Speaker, it being almost 6 of the clock, I will adjourn the debate until Monday.

1800

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): In terms of the business statement, we thought we had an arrangement for next week, but obviously we didn't so consequently all I can say is that the business for next week will be undetermined at this point for all four days.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning native affairs at Ipperwash. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has five minutes to debate. The Attorney General will have five minutes to respond.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): The reason for my dissatisfaction with the answer is that this is a very important issue for all of Ontario, and the question I asked on Tuesday is extremely important to dealing with this matter.

Just to refresh our memories, there is a provincial park, Ipperwash Provincial Park, on Lake Huron, not far from Sarnia or Grand Bend, and on September 4, 1995, a number of our first nations people went into that park and occupied it. One of the reasons they did that was because

they believed there was a sacred burial ground within the boundary of that park.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): That isn't why they went into the park.

Mr Phillips: The Attorney General is shaking his head and saying that is not why they went in. That is one of the reasons they went in, Attorney General. If you want to deal with it this way, I understand perhaps better why the situation developed.

On September 4, they occupied this. They were there on September 5, and on September 6 there was a most unfortunate incident where one of our first nations people was killed. I gather from reading press reports that the government denied publicly at the time of this incident that there was a native burial ground within the boundaries of the provincial park. Had they known or acknowledged it at the time, I have to believe things would have been done very differently. So the government denied there was a burial ground while this occupation took place and this incident took place.

We now find that on October 21, the government, in court, when there were 23 people charged with forcible detainment, and I think most of them native people, decided to drop all those charges. Why did they decide to drop those charges? Because the government finally acknowledged — this is what it says:

"The crown has confirmed the existence of correspondence made in 1937 between the federal Indian Affairs branch and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests which refers to 'the old Indian cemetery which...is located within the territory now being developed as a park....'" — in other words, Ipperwash Park — "This documentation gives objective support for the reasonableness and the honesty of the accused's belief."

"Further, it has been clearly indicated by provincial division judges at pre-trials that this defence will succeed in all instances...."

In other words, the government had in its possession clear evidence that there was within the boundary of the park a sacred native burial ground. There are only two explanations for this. The government, when this incident took place, was negligent in not properly searching its files to determine if this existed, and therefore the entire direction the government was providing for this operation was based on a false premise that there was no native burial ground there, or the Attorney General, who is responsible for native affairs, knew at the time that there was a native burial ground and decided, for whatever reason, to deny that.

There's only one of two explanations. You did not do your job, Attorney General responsible for native affairs, to find this correspondence that existed within the Ontario government clearly indicating that there was a sacred native burial ground. You did not do your job, and had you done your job, things would have been very different over those three days, or you knew about the sacred native burial ground and you chose to deny its existence.

The reason for this background is this is the question that needs to be answered for the people of Ontario, to the Attorney General, and this is why we're meeting tonight. Attorney General, did you know about the

existence of this correspondence at the time of the native occupation and, if you did, did you inform the police who were carrying this operation out? Or did you not find this documentation and therefore did not know it existed?

Hon Mr Harnick: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt makes some rather bold assumptions. He makes an assumption as to why there was an occupation at Ipperwash Provincial Park, and he makes that assumption on the basis of the only reason being that there was a sacred burial ground. I don't think he can leap to that conclusion because there is no evidence that is why or that is even the sole reason that the occupation took place.

Mr Phillips: Are you going to answer the question?

Hon Mr Harnick: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt asks if I'm going to answer the question. I am going to answer the question, but I have an opportunity now, in the five minutes allotted to me, to respond to the five-minute speech that he made, and that's a rule of this place.

It's very interesting to note, and I will deal very directly with the passage that he read from the crown attorney's remarks, but first he wants to know about a document. What I can tell the honourable member is that it's a matter of public knowledge that certain correspondence was released by the federal minister in mid-September of last year. I am not about to speculate who in government may have known about the existence of this correspondence in the intervening 60 years.

I can also tell you that an archaeological survey of Ipperwash Provincial Park was concluded by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1972 and it was found that there was no burial ground at Ipperwash Provincial Park.

But it's very important that you understand what it is the crown attorney said, because my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt read the paragraphs that he believed were pertinent and did not read the most important paragraph, I believe, and the nub of the legal issue

that was before the court that he is relying on. He takes some liberties as to what was said and the breadth of what was said without reading the key paragraph of the letter.

What it says is: "Whether or not there is, in actual fact, a burial ground within Ipperwash Provincial Park and whether or not there is in actual fact a valid right of ownership, possession or occupation by the accused persons, these are considerations which are not relevant in determining whether the defence of colour of right is valid."

There is a defence of colour of right, but it is not a conclusive issue. It doesn't even pertain to the issue of whether there is a burial ground at Ipperwash Provincial Park, and to read the letter that my friend did is to take some liberties, because he skirts around what the real legal issue in that very limited proceeding was.

I certainly have made it very clear that we, as a government, have been prepared to entertain any land claim that would be made pertaining to Ipperwash Provincial Park. I have spoken to Chief Bressette and indicated very clearly that we are prepared to do anything that is necessary to determine if indeed there is a burial ground and to ensure that that sacred ground would be properly protected. We have made all of that very well known to Chief Bressette. We've had discussions with him about these issues.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, there has been no land claim advanced. There has been no claim advanced with respect to the burial ground. My friend has taken extreme liberties with what was said in court and has not provided you with the full import of what the case was all about.

I think that very adequately addresses the issues that my friend has raised, and those are my submissions.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		

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Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
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Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
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Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 4 November 1996

Lundi 4 novembre 1996



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 November 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 novembre 1996

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The results are in: a unanimous decision by the OMA to reject the agreement. All doctor groups, all specialty groups from all regions across the province have overwhelmingly said no to Jim Wilson. Why did the medical profession reject this deal so decisively? Because they knew it was a bad deal — bad for doctors and, most importantly, bad for patients.

Let me try to capture for you the extent of the rejection of this deal: 91% of critical care physicians, 100% of cardiovascular surgeons, a staggering 95% of interns and residents, and 96% of medical students all rejected this deal, all said no. Sixty-eight per cent of the doctors in Mr Wilson's region and 68% of the doctors in the Premier's riding of North Bay voted against it. In the Deputy Premier's riding of Parry Sound, an overwhelming 87% saw through this government and rejected this bad deal.

This is just another example of a crisis in our own health care as produced, planned and managed by the Minister of Health. Jim Wilson is moving across this province destroying hospitals, gutting health care and now putting patients at risk. I think we should hold a referendum on whether to reject Jim Wilson and watch the overwhelming support roll in. It doesn't take much to recognize that he, the Minister of Health, is the area of greatest concern in our health care, and that really needs to be cut.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): This weekend I had the opportunity to attend the banquet of the Whitney fire department in the town of South Porcupine and I had an opportunity during that banquet to speak to many firefighters who were in attendance about how they felt about what this government is doing around Bill 84.

The Solicitor General has brought to the Legislature a most regressive bill that is really a slap in the face of firefighters across this province. They're telling the firefighters that they're going to do a number of things, but one of the things that makes absolutely no sense is that they're trying to tell firefighters they're going to take away their right to strike. Firefighters in the province of Ontario have never struck. They have never been in a position where they've withheld their services from the people of this province. Because they are professional

and because they care about the people they protect, they've always respected that they try to negotiate a contract at the bargaining table and try to do so without going out on strike. This government is saying it wants to take that away because it doesn't believe in workers' rights.

There are going to be firefighters from across Ontario coming to Queen's Park on Wednesday. I know, having met with the professional force on the weekend, that at least 16 firefighters from the city of Timmins will be coming down here to join their brothers and sisters at Queen's Park to try to say to the government of Ontario, "Stop this attack on firefighters."

It is one thing to try to reduce the deficit of this province, but when you try to mix your ideology with that by taking away people's rights, such as you are with firefighters, it has nothing to do with your agenda and has everything to do with attacking the hardworking men and women of this province. I say shame on you.

DIABETES

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My staff has classified this speech as No Sugar Tonight because November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Diabetes is a chronic disorder that affects the body's ability to break down sugar for fuel. Diabetes is the third leading cause of death in Ontario and Canada after heart disease and cancer. More than 500,000 people in Ontario have diabetes — that's 1 out of 20 Canadians. Diabetes doubles the chance of heart disease and stroke and is responsible for 25% of the cardiac surgery, 25% to 40% of the kidney disease and 50% of the non-traumatic amputations.

On September 27 of this year, Minister Jim Wilson announced a reinvestment of \$5.8 million to expand diabetes education programs and services and create four new regional diabetes networks across Ontario. This is similar to the highly successful programs already in operation in the north.

I would like to pay tribute to Jennifer Haskett from Lucan, Ontario, who recently published a cookbook entitled No Sugar Tonight for diabetics, including favourite recipes for campers and the staff of Camp Huronda, which is operated by the Canadian Diabetes Association.

With continued education and expansion of services, our aim is to reduce these life-threatening complications by 50% within five years. We continue to hope a cure for diabetes is not too far off.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): In recent months we have heard a great deal about the challenges facing

Ontario's health care system. The government's so-called hospital restructuring program is of course not a program of restructuring but rather the dismantling of the health care system Ontarians need and deserve. This issue is of particular concern to Ontario's senior citizens.

I urge the Premier and the Minister of Health to listen to the advice of agencies such as the Task Group on Transitional Care, a coalition of 15 seniors organizations. The task group reminds the government of the need for flexibility when determining the length of hospitalization, recognition of the need for an intermediate level of care, the expansion of long-term-care facilities to replace any elimination of chronic care beds, and the establishment of more accessible after-hours clinics to absorb the reduction in emergency room care.

Senior citizens have worked throughout their lives with the expectation that when they are in need of essential services like the health care system, care will be available to them. Rather than concentrating only on the fiscal bottom line, I urge the government in the strongest possible terms to respect the dignity of Ontario's senior citizens and their basic health care needs. Governing is about compassion and concern for society's most vulnerable citizens, not only the financial bottom line.

1340

POLICE SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On October 29 representatives of over 50 community organizations condemned the Tory review currently being done on civilian oversight of the police. The community representatives expressed a number of concerns, which I share, that call into question the government's basic commitment to the principles of civilian oversight. The major concern is the lack of consultation that has occurred with the broader community in the province, particularly with groups that have repeatedly called into question the accountability of the police and the functioning of the police complaints process.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General began this action by calling together a so-called summit, the delegates to which were handpicked to ensure that the pre-determined responses directed by the government in the discussion paper would indeed result. Then the ministry entered into post-summit consultations with a very select group representative of police chiefs, police associations, AMO and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. They met over eight days discussing proposed changes to the Police Services Act, but they never met with the interested community groups, nor did they ensure that the review team itself included representation from those groups. The time frame for the public consultation is less than one month, giving little or no time for effective preparation by diverse communities.

The police require the confidence of the community, to which we delegate policing authority. It is a shame that this government has embarked on yet another effort to undo the reforms of the past few years and return to a conservative era —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

RESEARCH AWARDS

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements being made in research in Ontario universities. Two professors at McMaster University in Hamilton have been honoured with the prestigious Synergy award sponsored by the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Conference Board of Canada. These awards recognize excellence in research, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship that leads to both commercial and academic benefits.

Dr Mark McDermott's work with Connaught Laboratories resulted in the development of a new method of delivering vaccines orally. His work will be welcome news to millions of children and a few adults who cringe at the sight of a doctor's needle. Dr Bob Pelton received the award for his work with Dorset Industrial Chemical Ltd, which led to improvements in the manufacturing of paper, making the process more efficient and helping to preserve our environment.

Not only do these awards recognize true excellence, they also demonstrate how cutting-edge applied research can work for the benefit of the economic, social and intellectual life of everyone in Ontario. This makes our province an international leader in the development of tomorrow's technologies.

I'm sure the members of this House will join me in congratulating McMaster University and professors McDermott and Pelton for their extraordinary accomplishments.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I rise today out of a concern for a constituent, Sarah Lenneau. Sarah was waiting and waiting for the family support program to update its support payments by garnisheeing her husband's salary.

Her account is now \$1,800 in arrears. She says it was easier to get direct payment from her ex-husband through the family support, but the FSP is warning both of them not to take that route. Her ex-husband fully agreed to this and completed the paperwork several months ago, but administrators for the family support program just can't get their act together. We know whose fault it is.

Mrs Lenneau has called the family support program numerous times over the past six months but can't get any information or action. Just last week she was told she may not get any information on her payment and get it corrected before December because the family support program is in the midst of moving. In total, Mrs Lenneau has waited more than five months for her file to be corrected. I question whether this isn't a violation of her right to access of personal information. Minister, admit it: Your family support transition plan is nothing more than an unmitigated disaster.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to inform the Minister of Labour that the Ontario Federation of Labour sponsored a joint WCB and health

and safety conference over the weekend where over 1,000 delegates representing working people from all across Ontario came together to talk about the pending legislation from this government. Every one of those delegates had a copy of the leaked cabinet document that clearly outlines the intent of this government to decimate the rights that workers have under WCB. They took great exception to the idea that this legislation would be introduced in this session and rammed through by the end of this year without province-wide public hearings.

I'm here to tell the government that those representatives and the hundreds of thousands of workers they represent demand their right to be heard in terms of province-wide public hearings when you bring down your devastating WCB legislation. You have an obligation. The Cam Jackson report was developed in secret. There weren't public meetings. In fact, this cabinet document says you're going to go beyond that report anyway. So there's no excuse, no argument, no acceptance that this piece of legislation would be introduced in this House and rammed through without province-wide public hearings. I tell the government, you have an obligation to listen to the working people of this province and give them their democratic voice.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): I am proud and excited to announce that a young person from Sarnia has been awarded a scholarship through the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario.

If anyone isn't familiar with these clubs, listen up, because they are an asset to every community lucky enough to have one. A partnership of corporate sponsors, youth and adult volunteers as well as a small number of paid staff have developed unique club programs responsive to the particular needs of children and youth in the local communities.

The Boys and Girls Clubs recognize that every youth has potential and since 1992 have been distributing scholarship grants to help them develop that potential.

Michelle Duffield is the first young person to receive this award in Sarnia. Our Boys and Girls Club is very excited about that, and so am I. Michelle plans to complete the child and youth worker program at Lambton College and go on to work in a group home or detention centre. I wish her the best of luck.

APOLOGY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Last week in debate I made some intemperate comments to the Premier, and I'd like to withdraw and apologize for the comments I made.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): So noted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's

issues): Community safety is a fundamental pillar of a quality family life in Ontario and a top priority of this government. Our government is committed to addressing violence against women in an effective and meaningful way. As part of our ongoing commitment to violence prevention and community safety, I rise today to recognize November as Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario.

A 1993 Statistics Canada survey found that one woman in four has been assaulted by her husband or live-in partner. The same survey showed that more than half of all women murdered in Ontario, 51%, were murdered by their partner or spouse. This cannot be tolerated, and our government is undertaking several initiatives to stop the violence.

This morning my colleague the Attorney General, the Honourable Charles Harnick, and I announced that two courts in Toronto and North York have been designated to handle cases of domestic assault. These courts will feature specialized teams of professionals who will deal quickly, effectively and sensitively with domestic assault cases.

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In addition, I'm pleased to announce that our government is allocating \$100,000 to ensure that treatment programs are available to male batterers who go through this new system. By ensuring that male batterer programs are associated directly with these courts, we are taking a positive step towards breaking the cycle of violence.

Our government also recently passed into law the Victims' Bill of Rights, identifying and protecting specific rights for victims of violent crime, many of whom are women.

We established the victims' justice fund. This \$10.2-million fund will expand the victim/witness assistance program, the victims' crisis assistance and referral service, and will create a community fund that will provide greater service to victims of crime, the majority of whom are women.

Our government has also reinvested \$11 million in nine emergency shelters to provide safer facilities for abused women and their children.

In addition to these new initiatives, this government continues to spend almost \$100 million each year on the violence against women prevention initiatives. This includes funding for 97 emergency shelters, 34 rape crisis centres, 27 hospital-based sexual assault treatment centres and 16 male batterer programs, and a range of other programs across nine ministries.

We are firmly committed to providing services to victims, but we need more communities across the province to join with us to help prevent domestic violence.

We recognize the importance of community-based initiatives and we are grateful for the excellent work being done to eliminate violence against women and children across the province. In support of community initiatives, a few months ago our government supported the development of innovative anti-violence projects. Some projects include a project undertaken by the Metro Woman Abuse Council to create a greater coordination and a more effective response with respect to domestic violence; a project by the Community Resource Centre of

Goulbourn, Kanata and West Carleton to assist shelters and community-based services for abused women to establish a volunteer base; and a project by the Emergency Shelter Foundation of Hamilton to develop a model for networking and coordination for service providers that will maintain a high level of accessibility and service for women.

With the coordinated efforts of community groups and with the development of more cross-sectoral partnerships, we will find practical solutions to reduce wife assault and, in the long term, prevent violence in our society.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I want to reaffirm the message in the statement of my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues: Wife assault will not be tolerated in this province.

As Minister Cunningham noted, we announced today the launch of two domestic violence court projects, one in Toronto and one in North York, to support the government's commitment to assist victims, prosecute criminals and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system. We are keeping our commitment to promote community safety, strengthen victims' rights and build a swifter, more effective justice system.

Wife assault is a crime. Too often women are traumatized twice: first at the hand of the abuser and then through lengthy and emotionally draining court processes. The domestic violence courts will establish a designated team of crown attorneys, police and intervention staff who have the training and expertise to effectively support victims and investigate and prosecute abusers. Police officers will employ improved investigation techniques, including the use of 911 tapes, photographs of the crime scene, photographs of victims' injuries, as well as the use of audio and video equipment to tape the victim's initial statement. These enhanced investigative techniques will give crown attorneys better evidence with which to successfully prosecute cases that in the past they were not able to pursue.

The government has also spent \$40,000 to enhance the local victim/witness assistance program in Toronto, which provides services to all the courts at old city hall. This is significant because it is important to ensure that victims have proper support through the court process.

The intake process has begun in both domestic violence courts and the first cases are scheduled for early January 1997.

We must continue to highlight that domestic assault is criminal. That is why Ontario will continue to lead in the area of charging those who assault their spouses by maintaining standards that lead to the maximum number of prosecutions of this crime.

I would like to commend the high level of cooperation and commitment that has made the domestic courts project a reality. The domestic violence court projects are another example of the justice system partners working together to help solve the serious societal problem of wife assault. I extend our appreciation to victims' groups, crown attorneys, Metro police and judges who have worked together to make these projects happen.

In closing, safe communities enhance our quality of life, a quality of life that is key to promoting jobs,

investment, economic growth and safety in our communities.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I'm happy to hear that there is some attention being given by the government this month of all months, which is Wife Assault Prevention Month, a very serious time indeed.

It's important for us to bear in mind some of the statistics that face us. Today's Toronto Star reported some of its investigations and what has happened since it made those investigations. Of 133 domestic assault cases that were in the courts in the summer of 1995, "a quarter of the men have since been charged with the same crime. Also, of the 128 completed cases, only 71 resulted in convictions, usually on a lesser charge, and just 28 went to jail. Only three of 28 men ordered by a judge to take counselling have done so.

"And in 57 cases, the victim either failed to show up in court, or denied she was ever abused, or minimized the crime, or blamed herself...."

Clearly this is a problem of coercion, and 48 of those cases were dismissed.

It's entirely appropriate to focus on our court system to ensure that women and children are protected in these circumstances, but I'm concerned that what the government has announced here may merely be a shell game, that there is no real allocation of new funds, that we've simply shifted some resources from one sector to another, with the possible exception of the \$100,000 given for treatment for batterers, and even then that is to make up for cuts that have already been made.

The reality is that women and children in this province have been savaged by the cuts this government has made in this area of criminal activity and in this area of critical safety for them.

I'd like to point out to the government that if it were really serious, it might look at restoring some of the funding for shelters and not simply talk about continuing to allocate funds that are already there. The funds to shelters, rape crisis centres, hospital-based sexual assault treatment centres and male batterers programs are, by and large, the same amounts of moneys that were there after the cuts. If those are going to continue, I'm not sure that's a novelty; that's just a continuation. I regret that women are not being given additional protection.

It also should be of some concern to us that women do not find the protection in the courts that they need, because legal aid does not cover domestic cases, and so it becomes ever more difficult for women and children to obtain the kind of justice they need and deserve in the criminal justice system.

Let me just say to the minister that some two years ago we offered some solutions that are still pertinent and relevant. They might want to consider them as a way to really strengthen the program. One is that in order to ensure women are protected from abusive men they make it mandatory for crown attorneys to oppose bail in cases where a man has perviously broken peace bonds or ignored court orders to stay away, and to press for bail conditions such as bans on firearms in cases where bail is granted against the wishes of the crown. This isn't anywhere in the announcement made today.

I also suggest that making peace bonds and restraining orders easier to obtain and more effective to keep women

safe from abusive men, and investigating other means of increasing the security of women at risk are critical right now. Again, it's not addressed in the announcements that are made today.

Finally, I think the government should examine what we had proposed, which was the creation of a specialized family violence court within the criminal court system to improve and speed up the handling of domestic violence cases, including spousal, child and elder abuse, which is becoming an ever-increasing problem in our society.

So we welcome the announcement. We think it's limited. We think it is a shell game. We'd like the government to rethink what it has done and strengthen its support for women and children in abusive situations and come back to us with some really meaningful projects.

1400

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): What is valid about this announcement today is that more than half of all the women murdered in Ontario, some 51%, were murdered by their partner and spouse. It's important to acknowledge that during Wife Assault Prevention Month. It's also important to acknowledge the failure of this government and the cuts they have made to the programs that help to protect those women and those children.

The CSR has had a target, and the target has been abused women and their children.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm happy to stand today and say that I welcome this announcement. I think any step we take to go forward in preventing violence against women is helpful, and I applaud it. But I have to say that when this government talks about investing almost \$100 million each year on violence against women prevention initiatives, what isn't in this document is how much was cut. With the small amount they're putting back into it, making it sound like they are investing a huge amount of money, just the opposite has happened.

We've had to deal with a stunning array of Harris government policies which disproportionately affect women and children across this province, from a whopping cut to social assistance to gutting violence prevention programs and unemployment equity and pay equity. The Harris government continues in all its cuts to target women and children. The minister responsible for women's issues knows this.

We've all been affected greatly by the ongoing articles in the Toronto Star about the human toll that domestic violence takes on women and kids in our province. I want to say to the government today that they should put back the money into the programs that they have taken out. They should give women the kinds of resources they need so that they do not have to go back to the abuser. With the policies of this government, unfortunately, I'm sad to say, we have statistics of many women who have ended up back in the home of the abuser because of problems with the family support plan, cuts in welfare, the spouse-in-the-house rule, and on and on.

So I congratulate the government today for moving forward a bit, but you've taken many steps backwards. Keep moving forward as of today.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I too want to say how pleased I am that we have a very definitive statement from this government that they will continue

the practice of criminalization of wife assault. It is an extremely important announcement for the Attorney General to make. Indeed, I have an appreciation of what kind of pressure he is under by some people in his own party and some supporters of his party to water down the criminalization of wife assault. It is extremely important that we maintain our leadership role here in Ontario, a role that has been developed over many years.

I was surprised that the minister responsible for women's issues did not comment on our experience in our own home town of London. London was the very first police force to require its officers to lay charges in cases of wife assault when they had reasonable cause to do so. The actions and the teamwork of the police department there with the crown attorneys and with the various supportive agencies is legend across this country. It is not necessary for that kind of concerted domestic violence court to take place in a place where the community gets together, networks, supports its police force, supports the crown attorneys, and there is a mutual action.

That has not happened in Toronto and we have read over the last months in the Toronto Star very graphic accounts of the lack of coordination between the police force and the crown attorneys, the lack of commitment on the part of both in Metropolitan Toronto to ensure that domestic assault is indeed treated seriously. This announcement today is a very good news piece.

I would just caution the Attorney General. He is setting up these domestic violence courts in only two of the jurisdictions, and there are many others, in Scarborough, Etobicoke, York county and so on, where we know from the statistics that the criminalization policy of the government has, shall we say, never been vigorously pursued in the way the minister says he would like it to be pursued. Let us hope that these domestic violence courts in Toronto begin a process of acceptance and coordination between policing and between crown attorneys in this jurisdiction that then gives rise to a spread of that kind of commitment, because without that commitment it's not going to happen.

I would just echo my colleague from Riverdale's comment that while we recognize and welcome this as a positive action, there are many other actions that cuts by this government are causing that are forcing women and children back into violent homes.

REUBEN BAETZ

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Mr Speaker, I ask unanimous consent of the House to note the passing of a former member of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do we have unanimous consent? Minister of Environment and Energy.

Hon Mr Sterling: It's my privilege to note the passing of a former colleague of ours, Reuben Baetz, who was the member for Ottawa West from 1977 to 1987. Reuben was elected in the same year I was elected, 1977, and served his people in Ottawa West for that 10-year period. As well, he served in the cabinet of Ontario, first becoming the Minister of Energy, then the Minister of Culture and Recreation, as it was then.

Mr Baetz had a significant and long career in public life before he came to Queen's Park. He was the former president of the International Council on Social Welfare, former member of the Ontario Economic Council, Canada Manpower and Immigration Council, Canadian Association of Social Workers and a trustee of the Canadian Institute for Research on Public Policy.

His interest in social welfare came from the history of his life in that his father was a Lutheran minister, and Reuben learned many things from his father. He travelled to Germany on a mission in social work and was bitten at that time by the plight of many people in our world. He fought for these people during his lifetime.

Reuben was very fortunate. He had a very strong partner while going through life, his wife Jule, whom many of us got to know during his time as a member of this Legislature. He was the proud father of three children, Mark, Anne and Carla, and had six grandchildren.

Reuben Baetz I believe served this province in a very dignified and intelligent way. He had the maturity of a great deal of experience when he got to this House. He used that experience to assist the Davis government in terms of its deliberations over the period of seven or eight years that he was a minister there.

I'll always remember Reuben and his family for their contribution to this place. I will always remember Reuben for standing up for the poor and less fortunate in our province and in our country. I'll remember him also for his cheerful attitude, his easygoing manner and his ability to get along with people not only on the government side but also on the opposition side.

I believe we all owe a great deal of gratitude to the memory of Reuben Baetz. We wish his family all our condolences and sympathies in this tough time. Reuben went through a long illness, and I know how difficult it was for his wife and family to endure that for the past six or eight months.

We thank the family for giving Reuben to the citizens of Ontario for the period of time they did. We will respect him always.

1410

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My colleagues and I want to associate ourselves with the remarks of the Minister of Environment and Energy in expressing our condolences to the family of the late Reuben Baetz.

I remember Reuben very well. He was all of the things that Mr Sterling has indicated in his excellent remarks this afternoon. I said to someone earlier, when I think of Reuben Baetz I think of many things, but had Jimmy Stewart not been cast in the famous role of Mr Smith Goes to Washington, Reuben Baetz could have played that part because he was such an elegant and stylish gentleman, and always a gentleman. A generosity of spirit, fun to be with. We had been involved, I remember, in a couple of fairly active issues of the early 1980s — the McMichael Gallery is the one I remember most especially — and no matter how frantic or frenetic the pace, Reuben never lost the good cheer and the generosity that were his hallmarks.

He was a child of the manse. His father was a Lutheran minister in Ontario. I think Reuben was born in

Bruce county, in Chesley, if my memory serves me correctly. I remember him well talking about his experience as the son of a minister in rural southwestern Ontario in the Depression. Mr Sterling is right in reminding us that he had a very strong social conscience. That social conscience, I believe, was born from that experience as a minister's son in the Depression of the 1930s. He spent time with the Lutheran overseas service in postwar Europe, and I remember well his discussions about what he found in Germany and Hungary and other parts of central Europe where he played a very active role in the reconstruction of that period.

Reuben was also like another famous Ottawa Conservative, Charlotte Whitton, in that he had long and strong association with some of the leading child advocate and social welfare agencies. He was for many years the executive director of the Canadian Council on Social Development. His career, not just here at the Legislature and in government but elsewhere in the province and country, reminds us that a social conscience is and ought to remain an important part of the responsibilities of individual citizens and public personalities.

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to extend to his wife and his family our sincerest condolences. We will remember him always as an outstanding part of Ontario legislative history.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I will not repeat what's been said most appropriately by the member for Carleton and the member for Renfrew North. I too knew Reuben Baetz, not as well as those two gentlemen, given the geography of this province and the location of their respective ridings, but I knew Reuben and I had actually heard about him before he came to this place, before he got elected in 1977, when he was executive director of the Canadian Council on Social Development. As a matter of fact, he went on from there to become the president of the International Council on Social Welfare, I believe it was called in those days. Then he appeared as a Conservative candidate and got elected. Coming from the social welfare field in those days, being a Tory, didn't raise as many eyebrows as I suspect it would today. But he cared very much about that which he did, and it was always a good experience debating with him.

The member for Renfrew North mentioned the McMichael collection. There was a bit of a brouhaha around the administration and governance of the McMichael collection, as I recall, and I can remember engaging in quite vigorous debate with him, but at no time did he ever lose his cool. I wish I could say the same about myself. He always had a very courtly demeanour about him and always seemed to be able to put things in perspective. Most of his 10 years, of course, were in cabinet, and he left in 1987. He knew when to get out, I think.

I always will remember him because of the way he conducted himself, regardless of the pressures that were coming at him from the two opposition parties. He really did conduct himself with much distinction.

I know he'll be missed by his friends and by his family. On behalf of my caucus, I wish to extend condolences to his wife, to his three children and of course to his grandchildren and his many, many friends.

The Speaker: I thank the members for Carleton, Renfrew North and Nickel Belt. I'll be sure to send a copy of Hansard to his family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMA AGREEMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, we have just received notice that it is your intention to go back to the negotiating table with the Ontario Medical Association tomorrow, as we are now four days away from the threatened health care crisis in this province. I stress again that this crisis which you continue to face is a crisis of your own making, that you bullied through your changes to the health care system and that you tried to bully your way into an agreement. You backed yourself into a corner, you lost, and now you have to try again.

Minister, it's quite clear that your so-called deal with the Ontario Medical Association didn't measure up for doctors of this province, but what is of greatest concern to us is that it didn't measure up for patients of this province, because a deal which would have forced patients to pay for medical services, a deal which threatens access to quality health care for patients across this province, is not a health care deal that works for patients.

I ask you, Minister, as you prepare to go back to the negotiating table, will there be somebody there to speak for patients this time?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The whole thrust of the negotiating team has been to do exactly that and speak for patients and to ensure access to medical services. That will continue to be the first and foremost thing that is on the minds of our negotiators at the table on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: I don't believe that this minister can possibly claim that his concern — his primary concern — is for patients when his idea of getting a deal was to trade away patients' rights to make patients pay for their health care.

Minister, you sat down with the Ontario Medical Association, with their negotiating team. You agreed — and it may even be, for all we know, that you actually proposed — that you would take away \$108 million in services that are now considered medically necessary, services that are now provided to patients without any charge, without any fee, and you suddenly decided that some of these services would no longer be medically necessary simply because you needed a deal at the bargaining table.

Minister, I ask you how you can possibly claim to be representing the concerns of patients when you were prepared to trade away their rights, to force them to pay for their health care in order to get a deal. If you are not representing patients — and I don't believe you have been — I ask you, who will be in these next rounds of talks?

Hon Mr Wilson: I say with all due respect that I think the honourable member might have her words a bit mixed

up. Now she's talking about patients' rights to pay for their health care, and I must admit this side of the House is totally confused.

Mrs McLeod: Let me make it abundantly clear to the minister, because it is quite clear that what this minister was prepared to trade away were patients' rights to health care and to force them to pay for the care that they now receive without fee. What is obvious to everyone is that you were prepared to sit down quietly and secretly at a bargaining table and you were prepared to bargain away patients' health care — \$108 million in services that patients were entitled to.

You were not prepared to say, before the deal was voted on, exactly what services you now consider to be medically unnecessary; you weren't prepared to tell patients in this province what they would have to pay for. Quite frankly, I don't think either you or the Ontario Medical Association had any idea what services were going to have to be paid for, what you now consider to be medically unnecessary. You just wanted a deal and what happened to patients really didn't even come into consideration.

Minister, will you assure us, as you go into this next round of negotiations as you look again for a deal, that patients in this province will not have to pay for a single service that they are now receiving under medicare? Will you refuse to make patients pay for your next deal?

Hon Mr Wilson: The status quo is not an option in health care. The honourable member knows that; her federal counterparts know that; most of her colleagues seem to know that. We have to change the way we approach some of these long-standing problems that were existent when your government was in office and when the NDP was in office.

The joint statement that is now passed was not the deal that the honourable member keeps talking about. There's much more to be done in terms of negotiations. I've instructed our negotiators. They'll be back at the table tomorrow morning and we will carry forward in the same vein that we have throughout the past 16 months that this government's been in office, and that is to always protect patients' rights and, above all, patients' access to quality medical care in the world's best health care system.

1420

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): That answer was as incredible as some of the reports commissioned by the Minister of Education, to whom I will direct my second question. You appointed, as you well know, your very good friend Leon Paroian to review the current process that's used for teacher-board negotiations. We all saw the report Mr Paroian released last Friday, a report which is worth about the dollar you paid for it.

We are now starting to receive the analyses being done by a number of legal firms, and those analyses are unanimous in finding that the basic information in Mr Paroian's report is not correct, that there's a lack of understanding of collective bargaining in general and of teacher collective bargaining in particular, and that the author's knowledge of our education system is sadly lacking. I'll just quote one part of one report, where it

says: "The report is breathtaking in light of the sweeping conclusions it makes without any empirical evidence or critical analysis. For the most part, its conclusions are based on anecdotal evidence or the prejudices of the author." These are legal opinions based on a clear understanding of the bargaining process.

I ask if the minister will agree with us and the various opinions that are now coming in that this report lacks credibility due to a lack of understanding on the part of the author and that it should be shelved.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I suppose there have been several days in this chamber where the Leader of the Opposition and I have disagreed on issues, and I expect that there will be more of those days in the future, but I can say that there never has been a time in my time in this chamber when I've been more disappointed in an observation made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Paroian filed a report on Friday of last week. Yes, it's true that Mr Paroian and I are friends and have been for some time. It's also true that Mr Paroian was compensated the grand total of a dollar for three months' work. He is a respected member of the bar and a respected member of his community, and I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that he has extensive experience in labour relations. I find it offensive and repugnant when the Leader of the Opposition would criticize a citizen who has come forward and put his time and experience and effort into trying to make this province better and trying to seriously review the collective bargaining process of teachers. I find that objectionable.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member from London, order.

Mrs McLeod: I can assure the minister that I have been equally disappointed in many of his responses, as I am in his response today. I would have thought that your friend Mr Paroian would have had a somewhat better understanding of our educational system because as a counsel he has represented both teachers and school boards on a number of issues over the past years. But there is one particular issue in which he's been involved that concerns me as I see this report.

I think you knew when you appointed Mr Paroian that he was involved in a case that dealt very specifically with the issue of workload and preparation time for teachers; he was the counsel in this case opposing the recognition of preparation time. I don't think Mr Paroian's report can possibly be considered objective given the nature of his role of counsel opposing teachers on this issue. I think when you appointed Mr Paroian, you did so not to have an objective review but to get your personal agenda back on the table. Was this your back-door way of pushing through your old tool kit?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I think this entire line of questioning, just so you'll know, is reprehensible. This gentleman's reputation is very sound in his community. He has represented both sides of the bargaining table, just to be clear.

This is a very serious report that's looked at some deficiencies that have been identified in our bargaining process with teachers in this province by reports done by

a variety of people, including Mr Sweeney, over the course of the last 10 years. It's comprehensive. It's taken a very serious look at a very serious issue.

For the record, I take seriously the fact that we've lost 17 million student days to collective bargaining in this province over the last 20 years. I believe that's a situation that needs to be redressed and I'm glad there's been an exhaustive study done on it.

Mrs McLeod: What is truly reprehensible is Mr Paroian's statement that teachers in the province of Ontario work just four hours a day. I think anybody who knows anything about the education system knows how absolutely absurd that statement is, and I hope you will at least agree that this kind of a statement is nonsense and it is offensive to the committed teachers of this province.

Minister, I think until you are prepared to completely distance yourself from this report, teachers and school boards and students are going to continue to feel literally under siege by your government. In fact, even David Moll, chairman of the Toronto Board of Education, a lifelong self-confessed Tory, has said, and I can only quote a part of his comments, "This commando style of governing with its press releases, media leaks, short time lines, and no consultation has been detrimental to schools and their students."

Trial balloons like this unrealistic, uninformed and inflammatory report just add to the chaos and to the confusion. It hurts students. I ask the minister, for the benefit of teachers, of school boards, of students, in an effort to bring some common reason back to our education system, will you clearly state your intention to shelve Mr Paroian's report?

Hon Mr Snobelen: To straighten out the record, to clarify the record, I wish that the Leader of the Opposition had perhaps read the report she's criticizing. Clearly she has not, because Mr Paroian said that in the circumstances of a work-to-rule, that was the case, when the teachers' involvement was limited to the number of hours they spent in the classroom under schedule. That's the situation people find themselves in in the province right now, where there are work-to-rule situations, where teachers are not even allowed to take their work home to help students. So that's exactly the reference, and I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition read the report and not take it out of context and be accurate.

It's something that needs to be discussed. I think teachers don't like strikes. I don't think they like job action. I don't think parents like it or students like it. I think this will be a catalyst for a very useful conversation to improve the quality of education and the experience that children have in the classroom. It's not helped when the report is misrepresented by the Leader of the Opposition, who clearly has not read it.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): We'll see who is misrepresenting what. The Minister of Education talks about this objective report. The only thing that is objective about this report is that the person who wrote it is conducting a clear and objective attack on teachers and on what teachers do in the classroom.

Let me go back to the beginning. We've settled that the author of this report, Leon Paroian, is your long-time

friend, and we've settled that at the same time he was supposedly writing this objective report he and his law firm were representing a board of education in an arbitration and they were attacking teachers' preparation time. We also know that immediately before Mr Paroian started to write this report he was the trustee for your business property at 6191 Atlantic Drive in Mississauga, immediately before you appointed him.

Anybody else who objectively views this thing would say that Mr Paroian has a conflict of interest, that he is simply your attack dog. Do you agree that he has a conflict of interest?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you very much for the question, to the leader of the third party. If it is a conflict of interest to receive a dollar for three months of your work, and to forgo whatever compensation there would be for supervising a trust for that period, because Mr Paroian could not do that in all faith, then I guess that's a conflict of interest, because the gentleman put three months' work in for a dollar. I think that's commendable. Perhaps the leader of the third party doesn't.

1430

Mr Hampton: Every day we learn more about the Conservative definition of ethics. This guy is your business associate. He's on your payroll. He's trustee for your business properties. He's your personal friend. While he's conducting this report he's representing a board of education that is actually out there attacking teachers' preparation time. I think anybody objective would say this guy clearly had a leaning, clearly had an interest, before he ever entered into this.

Let me ask a further point. When school board trustees who appeared before Mr Paroian indicated to him that they were happy, that they were satisfied with the current teachers' collective bargaining system, he actually attacked them. He berated them. Does that sound like someone who is objective? When he was confronted with the statistics showing that the teachers' collective bargaining system has worked well, that it settled 97% of the contracts without strike or lockout, his response was, "If it's not broken, break it."

Minister, this sounds suspiciously like you. It sounds suspiciously like your comments.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Leader of the third party, come to order. Minister of Education.

Hon Mr Snobelen: This party, this government and certainly the author of the report on Bill 100 need no lectures from the leader of the third party on ethics, just to start with.

Perhaps it's an acceptable statistic to the leader of the third party that 17 million school days have been lost by school children in the province due to collective bargaining over the course of the last 20 years. Perhaps that's acceptable to the leader of the third party. I find it unacceptable.

Mr Hampton: I would have thought that if we were going to make some decisions about how collective bargaining is conducted with respect to education, we would want an independent report. We would want somebody who was prepared to be objective. We would want someone who wasn't coming to the issue already with an attitude, already with their mind made up.

We've already settled. This guy is your personal friend, your business associate, the trustee of some of your business properties immediately before you appoint him. Whenever anyone appears before him and gives him evidence which contradicts his viewpoint, he attacks them; he berates them.

Do you want an objective report on collective bargaining or are you looking for someone who merely does your dirty work in terms of trying to create a crisis in education? That's what it seems like. Do you want an objective report or somebody to do your attacking for you?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I suppose that when you have a comprehensive look at a system and you have someone who is well regarded in his community have a look at a system and you receive that report and don't like the report, if you can't find anything wrong with the report, what you do is attack its author. That's gone on for years and years. I think it's repugnant to take that course of action, but apparently the leader of the third party does not.

Let me tell you this. If the leader of the third party has some problem with the qualifications of the individual who has conducted this investigation, he might better turn his attention to the comments of the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation or to the comments of the president of the OSSTF local in the Windsor area, where this gentleman is from, who when Mr Paroian was presented as chairman of this particular group, said that Mr Paroian was objective and knowledgeable and would file a report that was well regarded and well respected within the industry. I think that's as good a recommendation as anyone could have.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the other minister who is creating a crisis, the Minister of Health. Last Friday, as a result of the decision of Ontario's doctors to reject your offer, you said you would take the weekend to decide your next step. Everyone in Ontario is anxiously awaiting the result of your weekend musings.

After all, it was your decision to give yourself power over the delivery of the entire health care system under Bill 26, your decision to claw back an extra 6.5% for medical services in order to meet your own fiscal targets, your decision to cut an unprecedented \$1.3 billion from hospitals, and your decisions that have put Ontario's health care system in crisis. So let me ask you this: After the weekend, have you decided what to do? People in Ontario want to know what you're going to do about the crisis in health care that you've created.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): At the invitation of the Ontario Medical Association, our negotiating teams will be sitting down together, and as per the last round of negotiations, we won't be negotiating through the media. It's incumbent that we respect the process, and the teams will get back together tomorrow.

Mr Hampton: Not a lot of information, so let me try again: This minister has managed in one year to anger the entire system of health care providers in the province.

The doctors are extremely unhappy, the nurses are very angry and concerned about the future of health care and the quality of patient care, and now the Ontario Hospital Association has expressed its grave concerns.

Yesterday the president of the Ontario Hospital Association told the press the same thing we've been trying to tell you in this Legislature during this entire session, that you cannot expect hospitals to cut 18% of their budgets without affecting patient care. You have cut \$365 million from hospitals already, and the result is clear: Services are being cut. Hospitals are laying off. Things like emergency services are being curtailed.

Will you commit, while you're thinking about this, to reinstate the hospital funding until you have your act together and can guarantee that patient services and medical services will not suffer while you're figuring out what you should do?

Hon Mr Wilson: For the first time in the history of this province the Ministry of Health has a very clear vision, and that vision was articulated and published earlier this year, as all ministry visions were published. Lo and behold, a lot of people have read the business plan, a lot of people have read the vision, and they agree wholeheartedly with the direction.

What the president of the OHA said over the weekend in his comments to the media showed great support for the direction the government is taking. He actually said that, and I want to publicly thank David MacKinnon, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, and his predecessor, David Martin, who was in office when we launched the restructuring. They've been extremely helpful in setting the direction of the Ministry of Health and in working. What the president has obviously asked for on behalf of his members is not a retreat from the policy but indeed a redoubling of the efforts to implement the policy faster so that we can get the true restructuring done as quickly as possible to ensure —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health, thank you.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health must have been dreaming, because let me repeat what the OHA said:

"What is troubling is that the government isn't saying whether the reinvestment money that is identified in the restructuring commission's report will be provided. Until the government's intentions in this area are clear, hospitals simply cannot plan and implement restructuring initiatives."

That's what we've been asking you in this House and what we've been trying to point out with respect to Thunder Bay and Sudbury. You refuse to give any commitment for the transitional costs, for funding new services and for capital construction costs. For example, you've set aside \$167 million for capital, and over half of that is eaten up in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. You've got an entire province to deal with.

Let me ask you this: While you're figuring out what to do, will you reinstate the funding so that people can get the patient care, community care and medical care they need while you're figuring out how to clean up your own mess?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'll take honourable members back to what was a historic speech on April 18 of this year by

President David Martin of the Ontario Hospital Association to the Empire Club, when he said:

"I know that restructuring and reform here in Ontario in some way lag behind other jurisdictions. Some look at our system and see how much has been accomplished in terms of restructuring in the past few years. I look at it and see how much more is needed...."

"Over the years, the health care system has been studied into paralysis. That inaction is about to change."

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): You'd better reinstate the money you took out, Jim. Put the money back. He won't answer the question; he's talking about something else

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, I ask you to come to order.

Hon Mr Wilson: To continue the quote: "Bill 26 created the Health Services Restructuring Commission. It was given a broad, sweeping mandate for change. The Ontario Hospital Association appreciated the need for enabling legislation like Bill 26 to overcome barriers to change where necessary."

The leaders in the hospital community don't agree with your view of what is needed in the health care system. The leaders in the health care community agree with this government's vision. We're all trying to work together to implement that vision.

1440

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. What do you have to say to the over one million customers of Consumers' Gas in Ontario who have received in recent days a notice that they are expected to pay, and are being charged, upwards of \$50 as a one-time charge to cover some miscalculations the gas company made last year?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): The member well knows that the Ontario Energy Board is charged with approving rates that can be charged to consumers in this province to protect consumers from gouging by gas companies. That is a totally non-political, hands-off, arm's-length process. Therefore your government and our government have no control over the prices charged to consumers in Ontario for natural gas.

Mr Conway: All I know is that the Ontario Energy Board gave advice to the government and Ontario Hydro about rates, and both Hydro and your government just ignored the Ontario Energy Board completely. We have a gas company here, Consumers' Gas, that made \$150 million last year, and now they're going to take an extra \$30 million largely out of the pockets of residential customers across Ontario on a one-time basis because they miscalculated the weather last year.

What have you got to say to these increasingly irate customers? Are you prepared to tell these customers that if this year's winter is warmer than expected, Consumers' Gas will do what they've never done before: give a rebate on the basis of unexpectedly warm weather?

Hon Mr Sterling: The member may well know that if the rate that is established before the winter season is based on false assumptions, the gas company will be

required to give a rebate. But I want to emphasize that your government and the previous Liberal, NDP and Conservative governments had no control over the gas prices directly, and you know that. This is an arm's-length process on purpose so that politicians like you and I will not meddle in it. If the member wants politicians to meddle in the process, perhaps as is the case with electricity rates, please let me know.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last Thursday Mel Lastman, the mayor of North York, put out a joint news release with the other five Metro mayors, and this is what they said:

"The creation of one big city creates less efficient and more costly government."

On the same day the mayor sent out a letter to all North York employees urging them to "voice your concern about the mega-city project and fight to save our city."

"Anywhere a mega-city has been tried, it has failed. A mega-city is too large, too expensive and too bureaucratic," he said.

Yet today, in a sudden about-face, he's quoted as saying, "I'm not going to fight it." Methinks we've got a problem here.

Mayor Mel Lastman, the original Bad Boy who never saw a fight he didn't like, is acting like a pussy-cat. Minister, are you cooking up a deal with Mel Lastman to appoint him as the mayor of your mega-city?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member opposite for that very interesting question. I think Mr Lastman is recognized as being one of the most astute mayors in the greater Toronto area. It would appear that he's had an opportunity to review all the facts and issues and has come to —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the minister.

Hon Mr Leach: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I'd also like to inform the House that we haven't made any special deal with Mayor Lastman, but thanks very much for the idea. It might have some merit.

Mr Marchese: I'm not sure I have given you any new ideas, Minister. Mel Lastman last week said, "I was the first mayor of North York and I'll be damned if I'm going to be the last one." Something transpired over the weekend. That's why we think there's a problem, that you're cooking up a deal with Mel Lastman.

The people of Metropolitan Toronto want to elect their mayor as a fundamental right of democracy. They want to hold a mayor accountable, not to have someone appointed by you and not to give power to a government run by faceless bureaucrats. You cannot have a government run by your friends at the board of trade.

What I want from you today is a guarantee, your assurance that if you go to this mega-city, the people of Metropolitan Toronto will still be able to elect their mayor next year, in the year 2000 and beyond.

Hon Mr Leach: That's very interesting dialogue, but it's very difficult to give any assurances when you haven't made any decisions on the issue at hand. We haven't made any decisions on whether we're going to one level of government for efficiency and effectiveness. We're getting closer to it, and if we do, I will be looking forward to having input from all of the mayors who are involved in the GTA, not just Mr Lastman. I have spoken to every one of the mayors in the GTA, and I'd like to let the House know that many of them are seeing the merits behind this proposal now.

HIGHWAY 402 IMPROVEMENT

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): To the Minister of Transportation: as you know, Highway 402 is in bad shape. Highway 402 serves as an important economic link between Ontario and major markets in Michigan and Chicago. It also connects the key industries of the Chemical Valley in Sarnia to London and the rest of the province. The residents of Sarnia and Lambton want to know what your ministry is doing to meet the needs of the almost 20,000 vehicles that use this highway daily.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): My ministry does recognize the importance of Highway 402's contribution to the Ontario economy. We have committed funding towards the rehabilitation of almost 40 kilometres between Strathroy and London. So far there have been three phases of pavement rehabilitation. The contract for the first phase is now complete. The second phase is scheduled for completion in the spring of 1997. The contract for the third phase was advertised two weeks ago and construction will most likely begin in the spring of 1997 and will be completed by 1999.

Mr Boushy: I just want to point out to the minister that the portion from Strathroy to Sarnia is just as bad as from Strathroy to London. I wish he had paid more attention to it.

On a related matter, many residents of my riding were relieved to hear that a noise barrier would be constructed along a section of this Highway 402. Could you provide the House with some specific details concerning this well-received project? When will construction begin and how long will it take?

Hon Mr Palladini: My ministry basically is indeed committed to the building of the noise barriers along that section of the 402. A contract was awarded and construction is scheduled to start later on this month. A noise barrier will be built in Sarnia from Murphy Road east for almost a kilometre on the north and south sides of the highway. Construction will occur throughout the winter and the barrier will be in place by the spring of 1997.

1450

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Minister of Health. What I'd like to do is begin my question by sending over this document, Remote Northern Hospital Costs: The Need for Funding Adjustment to Recognize Inherent Costs. In the report, the authors have raised concerns with respect to the 1996 and 1997

funding allocations and factors adjustment formula. I hope the minister has seen this report; it was forwarded to him earlier. They've stated that they are concerned that the funding method developed by the joint policy and planning committee does not address the issues of remote northern communities. You continually tell the House and the public that you're not cutting costs in health care. I ask you today, will you agree to the group's recommendation, as outlined in this report, for a service protection fund for remote hospitals?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): As you know, the joint policy and planning committee of the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Hospital Association has been developing this year's funding formula. The formula is not quite ready. I've read most of the report the honourable member handed to me today — it was originally released a couple of weeks ago — and will tell the honourable member that we're very sensitive to the needs of the north, and particularly the remote north. Last year's formula, which the JPPC recognized, capped most small northern remote hospitals at a 2.5% reduction. Just this morning I met with James Bay General Hospital, for example, which has extremely unique circumstances in all of the area it tries to cover. I'm very hopeful, and I'm encouraging the JPPC to take all of this into account when it develops this year's formula.

Mr Miclash: Let me go back to page 4 of A Voice for the North. You must remember that this was the document issued by the Mike Harris Northern Focus Tour. They indicated:

"Kenora Hospital, for example, receives the same funding for food costs as southern Ontario facilities. This ignores the extra cost of providing nutrition in northern hospitals.... At both the Margaret Cochenour Hospital in Red Lake and the Sudbury General Hospital we were told that hospitals need to have their roles properly defined and to be funded accordingly."

You have already acknowledged that northwestern hospitals have higher costs; it's in your document. The administrators of these hospitals are telling me that some of these costs are in the neighbourhood of 25% to 30% higher. The current formula provides no recognition of the unique circumstances faced by these remote northern hospitals. Can I have your commitment today — I want your commitment — that no further cuts will be made to these hospitals without their full participation?

Hon Mr Wilson: I understand and appreciate exactly what the honourable member is saying on behalf of residents in our northern communities. I would also provide my own examples from the discussion with James Bay this morning. A four-litre bag of milk is over \$13 — tremendously more expensive than here.

We are challenging hospital after hospital to come forward and make sure we do an examination of their historic funding levels. Many of these hospitals' historic funding levels recognize the costs already. James Bay, for example, has been given funding over the years to provide housing for all of the employees; otherwise there wouldn't be affordable housing for the employees of its hospital. These things have been built into the budgets on a historical basis, and we will continue to be sensitive as future formulas are developed.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Last Thursday my leader asked the Minister of Health if he would meet with some community leaders in the Sudbury area over their concerns about the delivery of health care in our community. You responded that you did not want to set up a parallel system of consultation while the Health Services Restructuring Commission was doing its work.

What I want to ask you today is, do you understand clearly what the mandate of the commission is versus your mandate? Because the mandate of the commission does not deal with the level of reinvestment of savings from that community, does not deal with labour adjustment, does not deal with the development of community-based services, what we are asking you is if you will meet with community leaders who want to talk to you about areas of health care that are outside the mandate of what the commission is recommending and certainly what the commission has the authority to impose. Why will you not meet with community leaders on those issues?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The honourable member is in error. The commission deals with all of those things, and the proof is in the pudding. Look at the final direction from the commission with respect to Thunder Bay. It clearly says that a labour adjustment policy and human resources plan must be put in place. It directs that's to happen and it will monitor to make sure that does happen.

Why, in the case of both Thunder Bay and Sudbury, is the government being asked to fund tens of millions, or millions of dollars if you take the one case of Thunder Bay — about \$10 million in new community services? Why are we being asked that if the commission doesn't have the authority to deal with that? The directives are very clear in terms of beefing up certain community-based services. The directives are also very clear in terms of providing about \$10 million worth of new hospital equipment and 200 transitional beds. Gaps in services are very much addressed in a comprehensive way by the commission.

Therefore, all of the areas are dealt with by the commission, and the district health council is there to make sure that if there is something the commission missed, it will be sure to bring that to the government's attention.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): That's just nonsense. The minister knows full well that the mandate of the restructuring commission is to close hospitals, and his mandate is to make the final decisions with respect to reinvestment of savings, human resources strategy and the development of community-based services. That's his mandate. He has the power to make the final decisions with respect to those very important issues.

People in my community have very serious concerns about those issues. They want to talk to you directly about the reinvestment of savings, about a fully funded labour adjustment strategy and about all the community-based services we need in our community to be in place before any hospital closes. Those decisions are yours to make. When will you meet with leaders in my community who want to talk to you about these very important

decisions, decisions that you at the end of the day have the final say on?

Hon Mr Wilson: It's very clear the law sets out that during this period there are to be no special meetings among the politicians, that the commission must be free to carry out in a very fair and reasonable way the restructuring of the hospital system.

I will be announcing very shortly — and I repeat very shortly — the government's commitment with respect to capital concerning the final directive of the commission in Thunder Bay. As members have correctly pointed out and the hospital association points out, it's difficult to find the dollars these days, but we're finding the dollars by finding efficiencies in other areas. We'll be making the announcements about the community services and about all of the other good news items that the commission has directed with respect to Thunder Bay. The government will be fully living up to the directives the commission has issued to ensure that we have a seamless and top-quality health care system in the north.

TOURISM

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. My question comes from the fact that I represent a riding which goes around the south shore of Lake Simcoe, where winter tourism plays an important role through snowmobiling, ice-fishing, opportunities for cross-country skiing and so forth. I wonder what recent initiatives the minister has taken to increase winter tourism across Ontario.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): In response to the member for Durham-York, it's a very timely question, because this weekend in the Toronto Star this supplement came out about Ontario, talking about "Cold Weather and Hot Times." That message is going to reach over one and a half million people, particularly those in Ontario. It's 16 colour pages, very attractive, and I think you already know about it. There are over 1,000 events listed in it. It cost, for all of you to learn, about \$250,000, a quarter of which was financed by the private sector. I think that shows a partnership between business and the private sector.

Mrs Munro: Are there any additional promotional efforts planned to attract more tourists into this great province, and what are they?

Hon Mr Saunderson: We plan to have more advertisements such as this. I think it had a big impact on people. Obviously the House knows about it. Yes, we are planning more of these. We're going to measure the reaction of the winter sporting crowd to this and then plan accordingly in the future.

1500

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): My question is to the minister responsible for francophone affairs.

On parle beaucoup, en ces temps-ci, de privatisation et de transferts de responsabilités gouvernementales au niveau municipal.

Est-ce que vous avez pensé aux conséquences du transfert de ces services-là au niveau des municipalités et des entreprises en Ontario? Comme vous le savez, la Loi 8 garantit des services, et par contre, en transférant ces responsabilités-là aux entreprises et aux municipalités, le gouvernement peut se défaire de ces responsabilités.

Est-ce que vous avez en main des études qui vont vous indiquer ou qui vont indiquer à la communauté francophone qu'elle soit rassurée de recevoir des services en français, même avec les transferts?

L'hon Noble A. Villeneuve (ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): Comme vous le savez, la commission Crombie n'a pas encore fait toutes ces recommandations, et puis la décision de Qui fait quoi n'a pas encore été complétée. Mais je peux vous rassurer — comme vous l'avez dit, la Loi 8 ne s'applique pas à nos municipalités — et nous veillons sérieusement à ce que nous desservions notre communauté francophone de la meilleure façon possible. Ils reçoivent déjà les bienfaits de la Loi 8, et puis nous avons certainement l'intention de continuer.

M. Grandmaître: Monsieur le Ministre, votre réponse est vague, et je peux vous dire que la communauté francophone s'inquiète d'une telle réponse parce qu'elle est vague. Vous parlez de la commission Crombie. Je suis d'accord avec vous qu'ils sont en train de faire une étude, mais par contre votre bureau, l'office des Affaires francophones, a un mot à dire à cette commission. C'est ce mot que je veux que vous répétiez en Chambre, que vous avez donné des directives très précises à la commission de M. Crombie.

Je n'ai pas à vous rappeler que la Loi 8 sur les services en français garantit des services à la communauté francophone et que si jamais les entreprises et les municipalités auront à desservir la communauté francophone, il y aura des injustices.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Put the question.

M. Grandmaître: Ma question est très simple. Quelle assurance avez-vous à donner aujourd'hui à la communauté francophone qu'on va garantir la prestation de ces services?

L'hon M. Villeneuve: Comme je vous dis, la commission Crombie va soumettre son rapport prochainement. M^{me} Gisèle Lalonde, qui vient de tout près de chez vous, est sur cette commission-là et elle veille certainement à ce qu'on desserve notre francophonie. Alors, je peux rassurer mon honorable collègue que nous allons faire notre grand possible, tout en demeurant économiquement efficace, de desservir notre francophonie.

ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. As you know, the Sun and the Toronto Star reported that Dave Johnson threatened a review or a reassessment of the Ontario Labour Relations Board because he didn't like its ruling on the Metro Days of Action. The Chair of Management

Board says he doesn't remember what he said. The Premier says he's satisfied with that response.

It's now up to you to restore some confidence in the independence of the labour board. If you fire any more vice-chairs, if you conduct a review or a reassessment, everyone who deals with the labour board will see it as the promised retaliation. Will you commit right now that there will be no such review or reassessment and no further firings of labour board members?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): To the member opposite, given the present situation, obviously it would be inappropriate for me to make any further comment at this time.

Mr Christopherson: It's a little bit late in the day for cabinet ministers to suddenly be worried about what's appropriate to say and not say. The independence and the integrity of the labour board are in question here. Minister, that's very serious. As a result of all this, there's now an application before the labour board seeking contempt charges against the Chair of Management Board and asking to have a particular case heard by someone who will not have to fear retaliation of Dave Johnson, either an Ontario Court judge or a labour board representative from outside Ontario.

The application says that Dave Johnson threatened, coerced and intimidated the vice-chairs of the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The union which has charges against Johnson says that the veiled threat against members of the board makes it nearly impossible for them to get a fair hearing. The minister says he doesn't remember what he said, and you won't comment on it.

Minister, you have a responsibility to ensure that those labour board members don't have to fear that your government will retaliate with a review or more firings of labour board members. Please assure those labour board members that won't happen.

Hon Mrs Witmer: That's exactly the situation. There is a case before the board and it's for exactly that reason that I'm not in a position to make any further comment.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. We have asked you time and time again to resolve the issue of obstetrical care for women in my community and in all communities across Ontario where we cannot get adequate care for our women who are pregnant. I have a specific question. We have a number of our women whose citizenship status is landed immigrant; for example, we have many Chinese women or Middle East women with that current immigrant status. They need a visitors' visa to get delivery care or prenatal care in the US. I would like to know if you plan to organize that for these women.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, as you know, the honourable member's community is taking the lead in trying to put forward a clinic to deal with the needs of women in Windsor-Essex, particularly around prenatal care. I just assure the honourable member we're doing everything on our side to make sure that happens for your community and the citizens of your community.

Mrs Pupatello: The reality is that in all the talking you've been doing, in fact nothing has changed. May I

remind you that this is not a simple case of people who can wait to get doctors' services. These women are due; they will be due before March. You had a deal which did not go through with doctors. You have worked on a clinic which is not yet open. We need more OBs. They have not yet arrived. The women will be delivering their babies shortly.

You cannot simply put this off and hope you will have some kind of an answer, because babies will be delivered somewhere. I am asking you today, on behalf of women with immigrant status who would require visitors' visas to attend care in the US, will you take the leadership role in ensuring that you pick up their costs for this added expense, to ensure they get the care regardless of where they have to get it?

Hon Mr Wilson: We're working very hard with health care representatives and leaders in the honourable member's community, and they're actually very positive that solutions have been found and we're in the process of trying to implement those solutions so that those worst-case scenarios that the honourable member — by the way, the honourable member is never very positive about all the things we're trying to do for her community and the millions of dollars of investments we've made and the money we've given to obstetricians in her community and all the special arrangements we've made to make sure they have services.

She also is never particularly forthright with the fact that many of these issues — I mean, you're new to this place but these issues have been around for years and years and we're moving forward —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: "Whining" is parliamentary. I'm not suggesting anyone is. She just asked if the word was. That's parliamentary. New question, third party.

1510

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I have a question to the Minister of Health. It's a follow-up on the question asked by my two colleagues from Sudbury. The minister indicated that it is within the mandate of the hospital restructuring commission to look at support services, community services, reinvestment of capital and human resource adjustment policy.

I am sure you read Hansard of Wednesday, October 30, when Dr Sinclair appeared before the estimates committee, where we had a very detailed discussion with Dr Sinclair about that. He made it very clear that he has a responsibility to restructure hospitals and close hospitals and that with respect to that mandate he makes the final decision.

With respect to all other matters it's up to you to make the decision. That's why the people in Sudbury want to meet with you, Minister. Under those conditions, why will you not meet with community people about your mandate, not Dr Sinclair's mandate?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): During this period between the interim and final decisions of the commission it's not appropriate, but as the commission

make its final decisions, as we're doing with Thunder Bay now, the government is very active with the community.

I will read the commission's mandate as was provided on February 28, the day of the announcement of the commission: "The commission must make decisions in the public interest, and in doing so may consider any matters it considers relevant, including the quality of care and treatment of patients, the quality of management and administration, the proper management of the health care system, the availability of financial resources and the accessibility to health services in the community." It goes on and on for a page and a half and covers most aspects of health care.

I agree with the honourable member that it's up to the government, after the commission has made final decisions, to step forward and show support for those decisions in terms of capital and other financial resources.

Mr Cooke: The minister still refuses to accept what Dr Sinclair understands very clearly is the separation of his role and your role, and you're obviously doing it because you're playing politics with this whole restructuring.

Every community the commission has dealt with is frightened to death that they're going to lose hospital services and that there's no commitment, nothing that can be enforced to ensure that there is proper capital — dollars for human resources, retraining and adjustment — and that there are community services. It's your responsibility to reassure those communities and the communities want to meet with you so that you will put your dollars on the table.

Your deputy was very clear: You've only got \$169 million of capital in your budget. The Ontario Hospital Association says restructuring is going to cost at least \$1 billion. These concerns are real. Why don't you meet with the people from Sudbury?

Hon Mr Wilson: Dr Sinclair, the chair of the commission, made it very clear in his appearance before the estimates committee last week that the commission has the mandate to look at the health care system as a whole in the community.

Second, I assure the honourable member that the government is fully aware of the capital requirements. We've looked at some 60 district health council studies, which your government and the Liberal government spent \$26 million developing, and we have a ballpark figure of what restructuring may cost across the province, not just in the communities where the commission may go but in many other communities. The whole hospital system in Ontario needs to be restructured. Some areas, like Windsor-Essex, have already done it, and when we came to office we lived up to the commitment and put a substantial number of dollars there. It's premature now to give dollar figures, given that we don't have the recommendations on these communities from the commission. When we get the recommendations, the government will bring forward its response to back up those recommendations with financial resources.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): You wonder why no one has confidence in the process.

The Speaker: Order. If I left the impression —
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I want to say that the question was put by the member of Oriole about, is whining in

order? I just responded yes. I was casting no intent on the answers or questions in the Legislature. If someone's taken offense, I apologize.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am honoured to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we as parents believe that school councils should play an important role in education, with clearly defined responsibilities limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we as ratepayers are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives,

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of schools to deal with board policies as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

I'm happy to sign my name to this petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition flowing from the health and safety conference sponsored by the Ontario Federation of Labour. Their conference was entitled "It's Your Life, Don't Leave Work Without It." These petitions were forwarded to me by Vern Edwards and Jim Paré of the OFL staff. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is attacking workers' compensation benefits and the rights of injured workers; and

"Whereas Tory plans include taking \$15 billion from injured workers and giving \$6 billion to employers, including the government's rich corporate friends; and

"Whereas Cam Jackson, the former Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for gutting the WCB, refused to hold public hearings, choosing to meet secretly with business and insurance industry representatives; and

"Whereas the WCB has about \$7.6 billion in assets and its unfunded liability has been steadily shrinking; and

"Whereas the Jackson report and WCB legislation are just part of a coordinated attack on occupational health and safety protections for working families in Ontario; and

"Whereas Tory plans also include abolition of the internationally respected Occupational Disease Panel; and

"Whereas the government needs to hear the message that taking money from injured workers and lowering incentives for employers to make workplaces safer is not the way to make Ontario a better place to live;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold full, province-wide public hearings on WCB reform; to listen to the voice of the people calling for improved occupational health and safety protection; and to tell the Tory government to call off its attack on the dignity and standard of living of injured workers and their families."

As I support this petition, I add my name to theirs.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I have a petition from the parents of Hilltop Middle School in Etobicoke and it's re education cutbacks. The petition reads:

"The Ontario provincial government, under Premier Mike Harris and Education Minister John Snobelen is threatening the future of our children's education and lives by huge cuts in the education budget. This action could result in any or all" — or, I may add, none — "of the following: larger class sizes, elimination of buses, elimination of junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, reduced libraries, elimination of special education programs, French immersion, instrumental music, alternative education, elementary library, extracurricular sports, developmentally challenged assistance, overcrowded schools, obsolete equipment including computers, reduced maintenance, reduced administration and weaker discipline."

1520

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition to present to the Legislature on behalf of 632 residents of the community of Thessalon and area regarding their concerns about the need for adequate nursing staff at the hospital for —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): This is a speech, member.

Mr Wildman: I was under the impression, Mr Speaker, that one could summarize a petition. If you wish me to read it, I will.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the mission statement of the Central Algoma East health committee is to secure and provide quality health care services to the residents of central Algoma; and

"Whereas the council of the corporation of the town of Thessalon deems it absolutely essential that two health care providers licensed by the College of Nurses of Ontario be on shift at any time at the Thessalon Plummer Hospital;

"Therefore be it resolved that two health care providers licensed by the College of Nurses of Ontario be made available to the hospital at all times.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That two health care providers licensed by the College of Nurses of Ontario be made available at the hospital at all times."

This petition is signed, as I said, by 632 residents of the community of Thessalon, and I affix my signature to it.

I could have done it shorter, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Algoma, I just remind you that I understand the rules and you understand them. You're supposed to summarize your petition if you're not going to read it. What generally happens is they summarize it —

Mr Wildman: I wasn't going to read it.

The Speaker: I understand that. They tend to summarize it and then read it. That's the difficulty.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I have a petition from some people in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education is initiating secondary school curriculum reform in light of the compression of five years into four, we would recommend that the following be enacted into provincial legislation:

"(1) The ministry recognize that the topic of origins is faith-based. Since evolutionism and creationism are completed acts in the past, neither can be proven nor disproven. Consequently both are religious by nature. In fairness to the parents and students of Ontario, equal instruction time should be given in presenting the underlying assumptions of each. Through the two-model approach, the skills of critical thinking, such as recognition of bias, awareness of society's influence on one's bias and the awareness of assumptions can allow students to examine their own belief systems and better appreciate an opposing view.

"(2) The ministry, through in-service training, should encourage senior administrators, principals and teachers to familiarize themselves with this two-model assumptional approach and accompanying skills of critical thinking.

"(3) The ministry begin the process of mandating that all textbooks dealing with the topic of origins in both the

social and pure sciences should reflect the two-model assumptuonal approach before being included in circular 14."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and contains 1,000 names.

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury's health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury's hospitals."

This, a 1,000-signature petition, is added to the 11,304 names that have already been signed.

WORKFARE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet here another petition from the good people of the city of Timmins, who are petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in regard to the workfare program. The petition reads:

"We, the following undersigned citizens, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government has initiated the workfare program; and

"Whereas the unemployment rate in the province of Ontario increased by 57,000 in the month of September 1996, giving a clear indication that there is a need for job creation; and

"Whereas the majority of welfare recipients do want to work and there's no evidence that workfare will create permanent jobs; and

"Whereas we believe workfare will eliminate permanent jobs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario has to abandon its workfare program and concentrate on job creation."

It's signed by some 200 people from the community of Timmins, and I affix my signature to that petition.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): It gives me great pleasure to present this petition today.

"Whereas the administration of Families Against Deadbeats, Renata Diorio, Heinz Paul and Danielle McIsaac" — who happen to be in the gallery today — "are in total support of Bill 82, presented by the Honour-

able Charles Harnick to the Legislative Assembly on October 2, 1996, outlining the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, to replace the Family Support Plan Act, 1992;

"Whereas the changes will relieve the taxpayers of Ontario and provide proper enforcement required to collect and administer child support payments and orders;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We support and agree with all of the changes outlined in the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, set forth by the Honourable Charles Harnick as Bill 82, and urge the Legislature to pass this bill into law as soon as possible."

I affix my signature to that.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the quality of care for residents of nursing homes and homes for the aged is being directly and adversely affected by the funding policies of the Mike Harris Conservative government;

"Whereas the funding deficiencies are forcing these institutions to reduce available staff assistance to residents to unacceptable levels;

"Whereas the user taxes placed on prescription drugs unfairly discriminate against residents of nursing homes;

"Whereas the residents of these institutions are the very people who built this great province and country;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide adequate funding for long-term-care institutions and eliminate the user taxes on prescription drugs for seniors."

This is signed by a large number of constituents, mostly from the Manitoulin district, and I affix my signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Tom Beatty, president of the Hamilton-Brantford, Ontario Building and Construction Trades Council, and Pat Whitfield, president, and Donna Portree, recording secretary, of Local 794 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Hamilton, as well as Donna Wright, the health and safety representative for CUPE Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure,

services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

On behalf of my caucus, I add my name.

1530

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas St Mary's Memorial Hospital is critically important to the town of St Marys and area from both health and economic perspectives,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Huron-Perth District Health Council, the health-related services study task force, the Health Services Restructuring Commission and the Minister of Health to support continuation of St Mary's Memorial Hospital with acute and chronic beds and 24-hour emergency services to effectively serve the St Marys and area community."

I will sign this on their behalf as well.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 800,000 children who ride the school buses of Ontario are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy from unsafe drivers who are not stopping for school buses; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved, that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 78 be passed. The bill doubles the existing range of fines for identified drivers and establishes vehicle owner liability.

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I've affixed my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 AMÉLIORANT LE PROCESSUS D'ÉVALUATION ENVIRONNEMENTALE ET DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 76, An Act to improve environmental

protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act / *Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à améliorer la protection de l'environnement, à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes et à intégrer la consultation publique à la Loi sur les évaluations environnementales.*

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I must begin today again with a comment on the title of the bill. Every time I hear it, I shake my head in disbelief. I forget when I hear the title, and I think, "Is this what I'm talking to today, is this what I'm speaking to?" because it has nothing to do with the actual content of the bill. The title of the bill is An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act.

As I said on Thursday when I finished off, the spin doctors that the Tory government must spend a lot of money on come up with great titles for bills. Unfortunately, the content of this bill, as the content of the land use planning bill and all of the other bills —

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Labour legislation.

Ms Churley: — the labour legislation, as pointed out by the member for Hamilton Centre, and on and on and on, the contents of the bills are always contrary to the actual titles.

On Thursday I talked a bit about that, and I also talked about the problems with the bill using the title as a bit of a guideline, that in fact it doesn't improve environmental protection. It actually will, this new bill if passed, and I'm sure it will, because you have a majority and we're unable — all the environmental groups across the province who came to speak to the government about this bill raised grave concerns about it, and none of their amendments were taken into account. So it does not improve environmental protection. On the contrary, it is taking away vital environmental protections, one of which is the very heart and soul of the environmental assessment process, and that is for the proponent to have to prove the need for the undertaking, the alternative sites, alternatives to the method.

Let me give you a good example of why it is so important for a major undertaking to be looked at from the context of the need and the alternatives to the undertaking. Suppose you have a proponent come forward with a proposal for a huge garbage incinerator right in your constituents' backyard. I assume that you would want to be able to tell your constituents, "Yes, there is this proposal there, and under the law, now that this government has allowed incineration back on the table at least as an option for dealing with solid waste," but at least I'm sure you would like to be able to tell your constituents that you will have a full environmental assessment. That means the proponent is going to have to prove very thoroughly that there is a need for this facility and that the proponent has looked at, particularly in this case, the three Rs, because incinerators involve the burning — that's what they do — of solid waste. There is, true enough, new technology.

I remember that back in 1982 the city of Toronto wanted to build an incinerator in south Riverdale. This used to be an industrial area — there is still some industry — that for many years had a very highly polluting

incinerator called the Commissioners Street incinerator. While that incinerator was still in use, polluting not just Riverdale but all over, the city of Toronto decided to go that route and build an incinerator in Riverdale.

In Riverdale we didn't know very much about incineration. As it turned out, very few people in Toronto, even in Canada, had done a lot of work on incineration. We formed a group. I remember David Reville, bless him, was the city councillor before he came to this place. He fought hard for our community back in the early 1980s and got city council to agree to provide the community with \$50,000 of intervenor funding because there was no provincial plan at the time. We had a group called Citizens for a Safe Environment.

I was an ordinary citizen then, a single mom, very involved in my community and concerned about an already big problem with pollution, ie, lead, and other problems in the community. I got very involved in this. We investigated incineration and were told repeatedly, just as we are being told now: "Don't worry. The technology is so improved, it is such state-of-the-art technology that there will be no problems with pollution. The stacks are higher and the pollutants are spread further. The technology is so good now that most of the pollutants are taken out through pollution control equipment, therefore there's not a lot to worry about in terms of pollution being caused by incineration."

I say this is not just about pollution, although we now know, for instance, that there is no longer a safe level of dioxin and that the very act of burning garbage creates dioxin and we get dioxins, furans, mercury, lead and on and on. Some of it comes up the stack and is dispersed for miles and miles. Several years ago, when we were in the process of trying to close down the polluting Commissioners Street incinerator, some people in my community from Citizens for a Safe Environment did a very interesting, I suppose you would say, experiment. We sent off some balloons with little notes saying, "Let us know if this balloon lands in your yard." People from all over southern Ontario — I can't remember the locations now. These balloons came down in rural areas, on farm land, and this was to prove that you send a balloon up in the air and the wind carries it in all kinds of different directions.

That is the issue of an incinerator. The pollution is not necessarily going to be just in your own backyard; it spreads all over the place and goes into our water and into our farm land, therefore into our food. Tiny amounts of some of those carcinogens are deadly. We now have evidence that some are not only causing cancer but are interfering with our very immune systems and may very well be creating serious problems with our reproductive abilities as a human race. Those are indeed very serious concerns.

I'm glad to say I did get an all-party resolution passed in this House. So far I've not had an opportunity to meet with the Minister of Health to make sure this happens. I know he's got a lot of crises and he's very busy and this may not seem very important to him at the moment, but given the epidemic of various kinds of cancers such as breast cancer in women — it's getting worse and worse. We now know there are connections between some of these chemicals, pollutants, carcinogens in our environ-

ment that are causing cancer, and we know that if we're going to get at the root of cancer and try to prevent some of the cancers, that is the way to go.

1540

I was very happy to see, for instance, the Minister of Health announce more breast screening programs for women. That's good, that's very good, and we need to do more. But if we don't start acting on preventive measures and doing whatever we can to prevent the pollutants from going up the stack into the air, into our food, into our water, then we're not going to get much further than we are now. I think we would all agree there's a humane reason for doing this but also, in terms of our pocketbooks, it will cost us far less down the road to prevent the pollutants from going into our environment in the first place.

I have gone off on a bit of a tangent here on incineration because, of course, the government is now allowing incineration to be considered as an option, and lo and behold, there is already a proposal put forward to the city of Toronto that a huge incinerator be built in the east end, this time not on the old Commissioners Street site, because, I'm happy to say, after many years of battling, our community did get the old Commissioners Street incinerator shut down.

It's interesting that at the time in the early 1980s when we started fighting incineration, the 3Rs had just begun. I remember running around city hall lobbying very hard with other citizens from my community and saying we had to get into recycling, and hearing so many officials and other politicians saying it just didn't make sense, that it would be too expensive, too many problems, and that was not the way to go with garbage.

It was the very fact that we were having so many problems back then with finding ways to deal with our garbage that drove politicians in our communities to start focusing on the 3Rs as we know them today. As long as we make dealing with garbage easy, as long as we cut people out, our communities out of the process, which ironically this bill does, even though it says "enshrine public consultation" — as I said on Thursday, de facto the public are consulted through complicated EAs because proponents know they had better do that or they're not going to go very far. So even though it's very nice to have it in the bill that it's now enshrined, it looks good, but the reality is right throughout the bill, all over the place, public consultation time is curtailed, shortened or not there at all.

We have a situation where public consultation is curtailed and when you have an incinerator proposal or a garbage dump proposal in your backyard, you're going to want to be able to tell the citizens of your community that they will have every option open to them to be involved in the decision-making down the road. They're going to want to know if the proponent comes forward and says, "We want to build an incinerator," that they have looked at the alternatives. They're going to want to know that everything possible has been done on the 3Rs and they're going to want to know that there's not going to be competition between the materials that are used for recycling, like paper and plastics and other materials, and that's actually going to take away from recycling pro-

grams. They're going to want to know that's part of the deal when they go into these hearings, that all of that has to be looked at.

This bill takes that possibility out. It's still in there as a possibility, but the huge difference between this bill and the old act is that it no longer is required under the act, which is what the Premier promised when he was asked a question by my Liberal colleague Mr McGuinty, who asked him very explicitly, would he require a full environmental assessment for landfill, and the Premier said, "Yes, I do."

This bill that we're debating today — and I understand we're going to finish debate today — actually, under the setting of the terms of reference in the very beginning of the bill, allows these key components of environmental assessment to be negotiated off the table. I say again, if passed the way it is today, this bill will break a key promise made by the Premier. Nobody's taking that seriously today.

In the whole scheme of things right now, with the invented crisis in education and the created crisis in health and all of the other areas where there are concerns and problems in the communities — the family support plan is a terrible mess. The Attorney General has created more problems instead of solving the existing problems, which we all knew were there because our government was starting to act on the existing problems. This government has created new problems — women were getting their cheques and they're not getting them now — and it's not fixing the old problems.

While people are completely preoccupied with all of the other changes that are happening in their lives and are going to have a huge and direct effect on them, it is true that there are not a lot of people paying attention to me today when I stand here and say Mike Harris is breaking his promise if this bill goes through as it is written. Right now the whole issue of garbage dumps is not before us, but believe me, every government, every party in this House, goes through a period of time when it has to deal with waste disposal.

Now I know this government has worked very hard, as it has with a lot of these issues, to say: "We're independent of this. Don't bug us about it. Don't ask me about it." I saw the Minister of Health do it today; I saw the Minister of Energy do it today: "They're independent. It's not our problem. We don't make the decisions in this area." I know that as much as possible the government is trying to do that, and it is doing that with garbage dumps as well. It's saying, "Well, we're giving the power back to the municipalities to deal with them."

When we came into government in 1990, there was a garbage disposal problem. There was a crisis. It started when the Liberals were in power. When we came into government, there was a huge problem which had not been resolved. Rightly or wrongly, it's very difficult in these situations to figure out the best route to go. Nobody wants a garbage dump in their backyard, but at the time we were told there was a garbage crisis. The Liberals were unable, under their legislation, to get anything up and running. Municipalities were having a difficult time as well, and everything was practically at a standstill. Nothing was happening. Our government brought in the

Interim Waste Authority and basically decided to take on the political heat.

I suppose if you ask Ruth Grier, who was then the Minister of the Environment — and for a short time I was her parliamentary assistant while we tried to hammer out how to deal with this — she took a lot of political heat and a lot of political grief. It was a very tough time. It took the heat off the municipal politicians, no doubt about it, and put it on her and our government.

What this government did was change the rules once again. This government said, "We are going to let municipalities determine how they deal with their waste." In the process of getting rid of the Interim Waste Authority, they also got rid of intervenor funding.

I don't know what's going to happen. We've got a very interesting situation now in Kirkland Lake where Metro has been — incidentally, I should say that the crisis was lessened, frankly, because of the recession. The big garbage crisis that we thought was coming didn't come, because of the recession. That bought time for Metro and other municipalities that were having trouble siting garbage.

I will say that the problem has not gone away, and a very interesting thing happened in our clause-by-clause debate on Bill 76. It was really, really interesting. Towards the end of the debate, when we had put in our amendments, and, as I said before, the government did not accept any substantive amendments from our caucus or the Liberal caucus, they did bring in one that I was pleased to see, and that was the amendment to allow interested parties to be involved in the setting of the terms of reference up front; although, as I said last week, that to me became a bit of a red herring because unless the bill had been amended to include within the setting of the terms of reference that the key elements of environmental assessment be included in that, then I believe that is a bit of a red herring.

1550

However, people did ask for that to be included and I believe that the government did that because even industry was saying, "We think people should be involved in the early process of the bill or of scoping the entire EA," because that's when it's done, during this very important time of the setting of the terms of reference.

The interesting thing that happened towards the end of our bringing in our amendment is that the government surprised us all by showing up one day with an amendment that essentially says that if a municipality in Ontario wants to put garbage across the border, wants to —

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you like me to check?

Mr Bisson: Normally, when a member stands and asks for quorum, it means to say that we would like the Speaker to check the quorum, and I believe that's happening now.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't know whether it was a question or a statement. Would you please check and see if there is a quorum.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): A quorum is present, Speaker.

Ms Churley: There was a very interesting amendment which was presented to us and the amendment had to do with the municipality wants to ship its garbage, say, across the border, which is something that Metro has been looking at, and this is an extremely peculiar amendment for a government that's deregulating in its own backyard and making environmental assessments much easier for industry. It suddenly comes forward, much to our amazement, with an amendment that says that if you want to put your garbage across the border you have to have an environmental assessment to bring it into the United States; you have to make sure there's an environmental assessment done.

We looked at this and thought, this is very peculiar. There's no guarantee right here in Ontario that we'll have full environmental assessments for the siting of incinerators or landfills. We thought that was very interesting and I looked at it and thought, "Aha."

For a long time up north, I'm sure we've all heard of it, in Kirkland Lake, there has been a proponent up there who's been working very hard for a number of years to get Metro to ship its garbage there in trains to bury in the Kirkland Lake area. This has been a very controversial — I see the member for Timiskaming just walked in as I'm talking about this and he knows what I'm speaking about here. He knows how controversial the shipping of Metro garbage to the Kirkland Lake area is. He knows there was a so-called referendum taken up there, and guess what? The people who lived closest to the area where the garbage would be dumped in the mine pit, or whatever it is, weren't asked their opinion, and they would be the people who would be most affected. Yes, the town of Kirkland Lake — the councillors, the mayor — has said it would like to see it there; it's jobs, it's money, it's work. But the people who live in the area who would be affected are very worried about what it's going to do to their drinking water.

Anyway, Metro, after this had been going on for years, decided a few months ago that it wasn't going to ship its waste to Kirkland Lake. What is interesting is that it wasn't based on any kind of philosophy around: "Should we be dealing with our waste in our own backyards? Should we be not shipping our garbage out of sight, out of mind, so we don't worry about it, and try to preserve some of our natural resources and try to keep some of the pollution that happens as a result of landfill or incineration or burying it in pits to a minimum?" It wasn't based on any of that. The reason Metro decided not to send its garbage to Kirkland Lake was that somehow in the years that they had been debating this and having consulting work done, they didn't happen to notice an important little detail: that it was going to cost them millions of dollars more than they had anticipated spending. I believe it was Jack Layton, who's the Metro councillor for wards 7 and 8, who happened to come across this interesting little figure and pointed it out to Alan Tonks, the chair of Metro, and others, who said: "Oh, you're right. We can't afford to send our garbage to Kirkland Lake." So it was off the table.

The proponents who want to go ahead with this thought that with this government there's no problem. Our govern-

ment did not support it; that was very clear. We said that regions had to look at taking care of their own garbage, that the very concept of loading up trains with our garbage, our waste, and sending it off somewhere else was not the way we believed we should go. Frankly, I don't believe we should be sending it across borders either. I know that happened in our government and that's what's being looked at now. We're not spending nearly enough money or nearly enough attention to doing what we should be doing, and that is focusing much more stringently on the 3Rs. We're not doing nearly enough. Research has shown that we can be doing tons more, and I mean that literally as well as figuratively, and we're not.

Metro then decided to look at sending its waste across the border, and then the proponents who wanted to have Metro's garbage brought up north suddenly were out of the game again. That's when the penny dropped, when this amendment came forward that essentially made it impossible for Metro and a local garbage company to send its garbage across the border, because now they would have to have an environmental assessment.

I have this interesting letter from the Ontario Waste Management Association. I think everybody knows that the Ontario Waste Management Association is no friend of mine. During clause-by-clause we had a rather terse exchange when I asked a question to the person from the Ontario Waste Management Association who came to present to us on the bill. When I asked him a reasonable question, I said:

"I wonder if you could elaborate on your statement relating to your request for amendments to 9(3) and 9(4), that if these aren't amended, you would absolutely not put in proposals in Ontario for a landfill. I suppose I would ask, what is worse in this, in your consideration, than what's already in existence?"

Mr Taylor, who gave the proposal, or who was one of the people there for the waste management association, said:

"I'd be happy to answer the question, but I have to admit, I'm a bit confused. In the last three and a half years of your government's mandate, we tried to meet with the Minister of the Environment six different times on matters that we thought were extremely important, and every time we asked for a meeting it was denied to us. If the NDP wasn't interested in our opinions when you were the government, why would you be interested in them now?"

1600

I think all three parties sitting around the table were in agreement: There was a stunned silence that this was, at the very least, poor etiquette in an all-party committee doing hearings on any bill. I remember when we were in government, we would have hostile people there from the other side quite frequently who didn't agree with us at all, but there was a courtesy that was extended in these all-party committee hearings. That was expected and it was extended, and people were, at the very least, on the whole, polite to each other. So that was an astounding remark. Later, I did come back and express my feelings about somebody refusing to answer a question in this way.

As I said, these are not particularly good friends of ours. It's very true. Our government and the waste

management association, when the NDP was the government, had very diverse opinions on environmental assessment and regulation and community involvement and how to deal with garbage. There's no doubt about it, we disagree fundamentally, and I suppose the hostility that was expressed there came out at this time.

The waste management association didn't think this government's bill went far enough. They were asking for even further amendments.

Then I get a copy of a letter written to Mr Sterling about this interesting, strange amendment that suddenly popped up, and this is what it says:

"Re: Amendments to Bill 76, addition to part II.2, municipal waste disposal.

"Dear Mr Sterling:

"It has just come to our attention that clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 76 has resumed and that the committee will soon be discussing this specific amendment.

"The Ontario Waste Management Association is strongly opposed to the inclusion of the provision in the Environmental Assessment Act. Requiring a municipality to submit its decision to contract out its waste disposal responsibilities is contrary to your government's stated intention to download waste management issues involving municipalities to the municipalities themselves. Any Ontario landfill to which waste would be directed would have already undergone an environmental assessment and would be properly licensed and permitted to take waste. What would be accomplished by subjecting the landfill to another assessment?

"Because of legal liability issues, any municipality considering a landfill outside of Ontario would, as part of its due diligence investigation, ensure that said landfill was properly engineered, licensed and permitted by the regulatory authorities in the jurisdiction in which it was located. What jurisdiction would Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act have on these facilities located outside of the province?

"We ask that you withdraw this particular amendment before it is considered by the committee."

This is from Mr John W. Sanderson, president of the Ontario Waste Management Association.

I believe the most pertinent part of this particular letter is something that I and the Ontario Waste Management Association agree on. It may be one of very few.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I can tell you are dragging the puck, Marilyn. You are reading it slowly. I can tell you are dragging the puck.

Ms Churley: What is the member for Mississauga South saying over there? I think she would agree with me on this, because I know that the member for Mississauga South must be — well, I don't know if she's an environmentalist.

Mrs Marland: I am so.

Ms Churley: Well, if she's an environmentalist, she should cross the floor. I urge her to do that today, because no true environmentalist, even anybody who gives the slightest concern about the environment, would be sitting on that side of the House. This is only one bill in many that is deregulating and taking back the environmental regulatory structure 20 to 30 years.

The Bill Davis government brought in new regulations and improved environmental protection, the Liberals

improved environmental protection, the NDP improved environmental protection, and it's true it was in degrees. Some did a better job than others. It went up and down, but each time everybody incrementally improved environmental protection.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The NDP hired an environmental commissioner for \$120,000 a year. We are still trying to figure out what she does.

Ms Churley: Mr AG, your government is deregulating environmental protection in this province.

You keep standing up and saying: "We're doing more with less. Don't worry, we can deregulate and we can still protect the environment." This government has cut the staff of the Ministry of Environment and Energy by one third and has laid off over 700, nearly 800 staff. Now I read in the paper that there's more to come. The Ministry of Environment and Energy has already been one of the hardest-hit ministries by all the cuts. I read in the media that there's more to come — very nice article about Mr Sterling, the Minister of Environment and Energy, in the Globe and Mail today, saying he wants to make his mark, he wants to do things to improve the environment. Is he going to go along with yet more cuts to his ministry? I should think not.

I urge any members, including the member for Mississauga South, if they really care about environmental protection, to join us and fight this government that is destroying environmental protection in this province.

I said earlier that there may not be a lot of people paying attention to me right now but, mark my words, a few years from now you're going to be —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Churley: I agree with the Ontario Management Association when they said, "Requiring a municipality submit its decision to contract out its waste disposal responsibility is contrary to your government's stated intention to download waste management issues involving municipalities to the municipalities themselves."

I agree with that because this is what this government has been trying to do: "Let's let municipalities take care of their own waste. We've got nothing to say about this. We're just going to have EA in place and we'll make sure it's regulated in some fashion, but you go away and make your own decisions."

Then they come forward with this strange amendment, in the middle of all this when everything is being relaxed and deregulated, saying you can't take garbage across the border now unless you have an environmental assessment to do that.

You have to ask why and I can tell you why. Kirkland Lake, I presume, thought: "We've got it made now. We've got a provincial government that supports this proposal. It doesn't matter that the local community doesn't want it. All is going well," and then —

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): That is not true.

Ms Churley: It is true. Kirkland Lake did a referendum up north and did not consult the people who lived closest to the pits. That is a fact. I will show them the document after this. I met with these people. I know what I'm talking about.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Have you ever been there?

Ms Churley: I certainly have been there and I know what I'm talking about. The people who live closest to the site were not consulted, but that didn't matter. Metro was going to go ahead, this government was going to let them go ahead and Metro decided to pull out because it was too expensive.

Do you know what this amendment does? It puts Metro in the position where they can't ship their garbage, so that brings the whole Kirkland Lake proposal back to the table again. Very neatly done, and it flies completely in the face of this government's stated commitment to have municipalities take care of their own garbage.

Make up your minds. Are you going to free up the municipalities to do what they want to do or aren't you? When it's convenient for you, the government, to help out your friends you manipulate regulations to make sure they get what they wanted. That's what is so strange about this amendment, and I will be watching with a great deal of interest to see what happens if this amendment actually goes through.

1610

There are many problems with this bill. I've mentioned before the ones I'm most concerned about, and that is not having to look at alternatives to the undertaking and to the site. There are people yelling and screaming at me from the opposition — from the government. They sound like opposition today. They sound quite defensive about this bill actually, environmental protection, and I've got to wonder why. I think they know what the polls are showing. Look what happened to the Republicans in the United States on environmental protection. Newt had to back down. Everywhere Clinton goes now, he's putting "environment" in his mantra.

You guys think you can get away with deregulating and destroying the environmental protection that we have built up over years, and this Bill 76 is one of many bills. Pretty soon we'll have Bill 57 before us, one of the red tape bills, so-called, "improving efficiency." Every environmentalist and every environmental group across the province, including for Bill 76, Bill 57, all of these environmental bills, the land use planning bill, are coming forward in absolute horror at what's happening. For heaven's sake, don't you get it?

You had a special report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario saying that she is worried about what is happening, that things are being done in secret behind closed doors, regulation changes are being made behind closed doors and aren't being posted, cuts are happening, changes are being made. People aren't even aware of it. Back in the omnibus bill — that was the beginning of the first onslaught by this government on environmental protection — we were shocked to find out that they completely exempted the Ministry of Finance. For heaven's sake, you can put anything in the Ministry of Finance and say it's a money bill. That's completely exempted, and that other ministry is to be exempted for 10 months if it had anything to do with cost cutting.

That was absolutely shocking, and I see the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale thinks that's just great. You give it a

few years and you'll be seeing if you think the deregulation and the dirty work you're doing behind closed doors on deregulating environmental protection in this province — it is going to come back to haunt you.

This is the second special report from the Environmental Commissioner. This is an unprecedented move, to have this come forward. It indicates that indeed there is a very serious problem, and everybody throughout this province is saying the same thing except this government and industry, its friends, who want regulation relaxed, who want to get out there and build over farm land, create more urban sprawl, who want to get out there —

Mr Beaubien: What's the definition of "a rich friend"?

Ms Churley: Ah, they want to know the definition of "a rich friend." I wish I had it with me today, but I don't. I'll give you the definition of your rich friends another day. I'll take that on notice. Because I have a list of waste management companies —

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Are you humming over there?

I have a list of private sector companies, some of which are waste management companies, and the amounts of money they gave this government in the very last election. I can make some very interesting connections between those donations and some of the changes that are happening.

I have seen letters go out from the Ministry of Environment saying: "We're looking at making regulatory changes to industry. Tell us what you'd like to see us do." Then you talk to environmental groups, CELA and CIELAP, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy and groups like that which have been around for decades, that are very professional, that have no personal interest whatsoever, have absolutely nothing to gain —

Laughter.

Ms Churley: I hear the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, laugh outrageously, in fact I would say hysterically, at that statement.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Those lawyers have all kinds of things to gain.

Ms Churley: I can assure the parliamentary assistant that those lawyers, as he refers to them, do not make a lot of money. They are out there working for the common good. I know this government has a very hard time accepting the fact that there are actually people out there who care about environmental protection and who are out there working with environmentalists, working to try to improve environmental protection in this province. I am astounded to hear the parliamentary assistant, who I know is busily sending out little letters to environmental groups, feel-good letters saying, "Come and meet with me; let's talk about your problems," and he sits there today and laughs hysterically when I say the environmentalists out there have nothing to gain personally by this except to protect the environment. That kind of hysterical, sarcastic laughter tells it all, that this parliamentary assistant and this government have absolutely no respect for environmentalists, who have been out there for decades, who know the issues, who understand the implications of this deregulation.

Hon Mr Harnick: The righteous dippers. Here come the righteous dippers. Spent all our money and left all the cupboards bare, and they are going to be self-righteous.

Ms Churley: You know what? I would say to the Attorney General, who is yammering away over there —

Hon Mr Harnick: If I am yammering, what do you call what you're doing?

Ms Churley: — that it was his ministry that let the intervenor funding program go, just let it disappear. There was an opportunity to bring in a new plan which would not have cost this government a red cent —

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to remind the House that —

Hon Mr Harnick: You didn't leave any money; you spent it all. You blew it all. One hundred million dollars in debt and you've got to be self-righteous? You have a nerve.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I can understand the bees being a little restless. I don't think we should kick the beehive. I'd like order. I'd like to hear the comments of the member for Riverdale.

Ms Churley: I would like to say to the Attorney General — and I suggest he look into it — that a lot of the deregulation that is happening throughout the Ministry of Environment and Energy has nothing to do with money; it's all ideology. There have been cuts and, sure, some of the cuts are now affecting the ability of the ministry to get out there and actually do what it's supposed to be doing, and that is enforcing compliance, inspecting, all of that kind of thing. That's not going to happen any more. Free rein for the polluters out there; no problem.

The same thing with the Ministry of Natural Resources. If you combine the cuts throughout the ministry and the cuts in staff, you don't even have to bother deregulating, because you've got nobody left to go out there and look at what's happening.

Hon Mr Harnick: We've never heard of another way of doing it.

Ms Churley: I would say to the Attorney General that if he looked at the intervenor funding project, there are ways which have been suggested by me and other environmentalists out there to bring in an intervenor funding program that will not cost this government a red cent. It can be worked out with the private sector.

They say no to that. What they want to do is curtail and keep the public out of the decision-making processes of environmental protection in this province. It's go ahead to the polluters, "Just do what you want to do; we'll freeze the communities out," because in big environmental assessments it doesn't matter how good and clear and transparent the rules are, if intervenors in the community do not have some kind of funds to match the consultants and the expert witnesses — the proponents have millions and millions of dollars to spend to tell their side of the story — then your communities are out of luck.

This government doesn't understand that. "Hold a bake sale. Do whatever. Make a couple of hundred dollars and see what you can do." They don't have a clue, not a clue, and they sit there so self-righteous because they know it all: "We're the Tories. We know what's happening. What can you, Marilyn Churley, know about the environment?

Nothing. You're just a community activist. What were you before you got into politics? What are all these environmentalists?" Norm Sterling, the engineer, the lawyer, suddenly we've got —

Mr Bisson: Duck hunter.

Ms Churley: Duck hunter too, yes. Suddenly we've got somebody with those credentials: lawyer, engineer, and he happens to just tomorrow understand all the environmental issues.

1620

I asked the Minister of Environment and Energy during a discussion of yet another deregulation red tape bill, 60 something — there are so many of them, I've forgotten the number. I asked Mr Sterling, the minister, "How can you, when you're a new minister, say you know it all?" You have every environmental group in Ontario opposed to what you're doing and telling you that you are deregulating and your deregulation is going to hurt the environment and you say, and therefore all of your backbenchers say in tandem, because that's the government line: "Don't worry, we're not deregulating. Yes, we're cutting but we're actually making things better. We're improving regulation. We are going to improve the environment."

I said to the Minister of Environment and Energy, "How come you think you know it all?" and the minister said to me, "If somebody can prove to me that one of our changes in regulation is actually going to hurt the environment, I'll look at it." I said, "Minister, is that a commitment? Because I can guarantee you that I and environmentalists across this province will be coming forward to you and showing you and proving to you that some of your deregulation is going to hurt the environment, that it's very easy to do." So I said: "Is that a commitment? Will you promise to rescind some of the changes you've brought and will you promise to relook at some of the things you're bringing forward?"

Then he started to back down a little bit. "Oh well, I'd have to consult with my officials here," blah, blah, blah, and I had to remind him, "You are an engineer and you seem to think you know all of this better than environmentalists who have been in the field, some of them for decades, and have always to date, up until this government, been brought in on consultations and their views heard."

They have been totally shut out of the process this time. Everything they say is treated disrespectfully. These respected environmental groups across this province are treated with disdain and disrespect by members of this government. I saw it here again today. That kind of disdain is so inappropriate and it is so obvious. The cameras out there today were unable to hear that kind of ridiculing laughter when I brought up the credibility of environmental groups and the general disdain that I hear all the time for these people.

Mr Speaker, I want to tell you that this is going to come back to haunt the government. The members are having fun today. They're laughing at me. They think I don't get it. I say they don't get it. They're saying that what I and environmental groups, in my experience over the past number of years as a community activist, as an environmentalist in my community — again nothing to gain, not a cent. When I was a community activist

involved in Citizens for a Safe Environment, I volunteered my time and I did it to make my community a better place to live for my children.

There are a lot of people out there like that, and I would say a great deal of the environmentalists who are out there fighting these days and fighting this government and trying to get in behind the closed doors where decisions are being made in secret and saying, "We have something to say and we know what we're talking about and we want our voices heard," are not being heard, and I will say to the government members today —

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): You don't know what you're talking about.

Ms Churley: There he goes again, the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale saying to me, "You don't know what you're talking about." I would love to hear some time his version of environmental protection. I wonder why he thinks I don't know what I'm talking about. He is proving my very point, that these people have nothing but disrespect and disdain for those of us on the other side who actually have some suggestions to make.

If the government listened from time to time, accepted some of our amendments, took us seriously and tried to understand that there isn't just one view and took it all into consideration, perhaps we wouldn't have such a gulf between us, the government and the opposition and environmentalists out there. But they're not listening, and this bill, Bill 76, that we're debating today should not be passed. It is going to hurt the environment.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to contribute once more to the discussion or debate on Bill 76 and respond to some of the comments the member for Riverdale made.

I think we have to keep in front of the people of Ontario that this bill, Bill 76, which I'm holding here, is really a process improvement bill. In fact, if you read the preamble to the bill, it's very clear. It says that the process of obtaining approvals was rather cumbersome. I think the best example of that was Bill 143, where the Interim Waste Authority group was all process and no results. I think you'd agree with that. They spent over \$100 million and never located one dump site or came to any conclusive opinion on how the process worked.

What we're really doing is ensuring that up front the terms of reference for the applicant become the starting point or the reference point. At that point — I can read right out of the explanatory notes in the bill — "The proponent will be required to consult with interested persons when preparing the environmental assessment." This is from the terms-of-reference period right on. Before the minister allows the process to proceed, the applicant must make it very clear what the scope of the project is. So you're putting up front all the information on the table.

The process to resolve differences could really be streamlined if the applicant and one of the opponents could work together using the same environmental engineer. I've actually sat in hearings under the OMB and heard two scientists arguing the merits on the opposite sides of the argument. Now, is that exact science if they can formulate both opinion and/or support for the same

application? It proves that there is a need to work cooperatively so that the planning process and indeed the environmental process can move forward productively.

My time has run out, so I'll pass it on.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought the speech on the environment was a very good one because it canvassed many of the issues that I think have to be canvassed. I was wondering whether the member felt this government was slanting its policies to those who wish to see environmental regulations weakened considerably, if perhaps this reminded her of the 1950s and the kind of environmental regime we might have had in the 1950s where the polluters pretty well had their way and the consequences of allowing environmental degradation to take place were simply not known to many and were ignored by others.

I know she has heard from environmental groups, as we all have, about their concern that this government has no commitment to the environment, that while they have a commitment to their economic agenda — and it is a well-known commitment; whether one disagrees or agrees with it, it's a well-known commitment to the economic agenda — they are prepared to elbow aside the environment if at any time the environment gets in the way of development or gets in the way of somebody being able to make a quick profit as opposed to a long and sustained profit.

If she has any examples that she has seen — I know she's listed some of those — where this government appears to be moving in precisely the wrong direction, I'm wondering if even she has heard this from some Conservative friends of hers who previously might have supported the Progressive Conservative government of William Davis, people who would be interested in preserving the Niagara Escarpment and not simply developing every last centimetre of it, people who would be interested in maintaining strong environmental regulations instead of systematically going about behind closed doors to weaken those in capitulation to people in the corporate sector who have not taken this action, as opposed to those who have taken the appropriate action. I'd be interested in her comments on that.

1630

Mr Christopherson: I am pleased to commend my colleague the member for Riverdale for her speech on Bill 76. It truly is unfortunate that many of the members across the way see fit to ignore the experience and the knowledge this member brings to the debate. Just because the government happens to be the one introducing this bill doesn't automatically mean that every member of the Tory caucus knows more about the environment and environmental protection than anyone who happens to sit on the opposition benches.

It's interesting to listen to the yabba-dabba-dooing of the member from Bedrock over in the corner who hollered out when my colleague was speaking, "You don't know what you're talking about." That just typifies the attitude that member and some others bring to listening to someone who this government would probably like to label as just a special interest because the member for Riverdale says, with great pride, that she was a community activist. We know how you feel about —

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: You see what happens when you even say the words "community activist." They start foaming at the mouth and shaking all over. They're almost uncontrollable.

But the fact of the matter is that community activists are the people who were at the front line of fighting for environmental protection, and in large part the member for Riverdale is here to bring that voice, to force you to at least listen to some degree to what is being said in the community. It's not just your corporate friends in secret meetings behind closed doors who deserve to be heard in Ontario. No matter how much you want to shut down democracy, the reality is that people in this province have a right to have their say, and this member was pointing out that you're working in the opposite direction.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Just listen to them, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Galt: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the two presentations the opposition made. On Thursday the member for Hamilton Centre made reference that the minister now could exempt anything and everything, and he was waving his arms frantically. I'd like to refer him to part I, subsection 3.2(1), and the only thing that's really changed is that the word that used to be there, "exemption," is now "declaration." That should be able to help him out a little to better understand the particular bill, that everything can't simply be exempted by the minister.

There's no question that during the campaign, about a year and a half ago, one of the most controversial issues in my riding happened to do with landfill sites and trying to site them, and I am sure that can be repeated in many ridings across Ontario; for example, Peterborough, Hastings, Kingston, Wellington, and on the list can go. We were in a horrendously difficult position as municipal governments trying to come up with landfill sites with the old Environmental Assessment Act, which we had to work with, looking at all the alternatives right up until the last minute. With this bill, it's up front; the terms of reference will be developed very early.

The member for Riverdale was making reference to consultation and not listening, and I thought she would have been embarrassed to bring up when Terry Taylor was in, but he pointed out that they had asked the previous Minister of Environment from her government on six occasions, and the minister refused on all six occasions. That was why Terry Taylor was really upset on that occasion and unfortunately embarrassed everybody present.

You were talking about spending. I can assure you that nobody spent more than the NDP government. As a matter of fact, there were over 30 staff on the minister's floor when the minister was there, just a ridiculous number.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Riverdale, who has two minutes to respond.

Ms Churley: I don't recommend that this government start throwing out cost to protect the environment, because polls show that people out there support the government's spending money on protecting the environment and the health of their children. When you lay off a third of your staff — and I understand now there is more to come —

Mr Bradley: More coming, \$3 billion.

Ms Churley: More coming — and cut the ministry back so deep that you're not going to be able to protect the environment and the health of the people —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Ms Churley: They have to accept that this "more with less" is not going to work. You don't have the people any more to go out there and do the compliance and the enforcement and the work, and that's a fact. You're going to have to be very selective in what you do, and with all of the other bills, we know that a lot of work is going to be left undone.

The interesting thing that I want to point out, which I never got into during my speech today — we never got into it at all — is the government review. Most of the delays occur during the EA process. I see the former Minister of the Environment in the Liberal government nodding his head to that; perhaps not to me, but nodding his head that that is what takes the most time, the environmental assessment process. We tend to forget that when we're talking about it. "Oh, it's all these citizens who take up time. They want intervenor funding. They want to be involved. They worry about this and that."

Mr Christopherson: How dare they?

Ms Churley: How dare they. Exactly. But you know what? It's a government review process. You couple that with the fact that you've cut back so drastically, that process is going to be slowed down even more. If I were the private sector out there, I'd be very worried about this stage of the process, because you have now made the process even less transparent than it was. Every case is going to be different and will have to be negotiated, and I can guarantee you it's going to take longer than ever.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Wellington to participate in this debate on Bill 76, An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act. It's interesting to be following — I think the member for Riverdale, if I'm not mistaken, is the NDP's environment critic. I listened to her passionate speech with a great deal of interest and I want her to know that on the government side we listen very carefully to what the environment critic for the NDP tells us and we take it with all due consideration. We thank you for your contribution to this discussion.

As members of this House will recall, it was a Progressive Conservative government under Premier Davis that first established the Environmental Assessment Act in 1975. This was landmark legislation at the time, making Ontario I think the first jurisdiction in Canada, if not North America, to formalize a means of considering the environmental impacts of significant activities or developments. Back then it was ground-breaking legislation and showed admirable foresight and resolve on the part of the government of the day to do right by Ontario's environment.

Now, some 20 years later, we have enough experience with environmental assessments to make improvements — and that's what we're doing with this bill — to make

adjustments and additions that will address the changes Ontario itself has undergone over the past 20 years. It needs to be updated so that it can continue to serve Ontario and the environment well into the next century. The government recognizes this need and the government recognizes that environmental assessment has become antiquated and bureaucratic in recent years, with the process often overwhelming the results being sought. Fortunately, with this Bill 76 the situation can be corrected.

This government is determined to make Ontario's environmental assessment system more workable, more certain, less costly and less time-consuming, and the government is taking action.

The first step was the introduction of Bill 76 for its first reading on June 13, 1996. Since June, the bill has received second reading and it has been the subject of extensive public hearings before the standing committee on social development. During the hearings, the committee heard presentations from a number of stakeholders — people who are interested in this bill — both those supporting the reforms and those opposing, and those making positive recommendations for improving the bill. We've listened to these recommendations, and in many cases we made changes accordingly.

The comprehensive discussion surrounding Bill 76 shows the keen interest of all Ontarians in maintaining the integrity of the environmental assessment process.

I'd like to commend the members of the opposition parties for the constructive role they've played in shaping the current version of Bill 76. I think this only goes to show that in some instances politicians in this House have the ability to look at these issues without partisan considerations and that some issues, such as the environment, are too important to bring partisan considerations forward, issues like this that cross party lines. The environment is one such issue, and I'd like to commend the opposition members for their contributions and their conduct throughout the debate on Bill 76.

1640

I want to say most emphatically that the implementation of this legislation will be shaped by one overriding principle: the need to protect the environment. That's the reason for the Environmental Assessment Act and for the reforms that we're proposing. But before talking about the most recent changes to Bill 76 after the committee hearings held by the standing committee, I want to run through some of its main features.

The government has worked very hard to ensure that the key elements of environmental assessment are maintained through Bill 76. These include the continued requirement of EAs for projects subject to the Environmental Assessment Act; the broad definition of the environment; the examination of alternatives in environmental decision-making; and an impartial and independent Environmental Assessment Board. These defining features of the environmental assessment process will not change. We are, however, proposing a number of new features.

For the first time, proponents will be legally required to consult with the public. This will provide early access for all interested parties and ensure that issues are identified and resolved early on in the environmental assessment process.

Early and clear direction will be provided to all environmental assessment participants through the development of terms of reference by the proponent. These terms will have input from the public and government agencies. They'll be approved by the Minister of Environment and Energy and will be legally binding.

We need this legislation to avoid repeating situations such as what's happened in Wellington county with the Guelph-Wellington waste management master plan. The county of Wellington and the city of Guelph have spent some \$4 million over a period of more than 10 years in an attempt to locate a suitable, environmentally acceptable landfill site. Towards the end of this process, so-called, a site in Nichol township known as N4 was selected for review and approval. This site turned out to be most unsuitable from an environmental perspective and would have been overly expensive to develop. The county and the city of Guelph are now back at square one, looking again at the possibility of going through some sort of process to find a landfill site, or a garbage dump as most people call them.

Unfortunately, due to the process outlined in the existing Environmental Assessment Act, municipalities seeking to establish garbage dumps have in the past undertaken environmental assessment studies that weren't focused from the outset. Approved terms of reference will provide that focus. Proponents will have a clearer idea of what is required of them, and interested parties will have a clearer idea of what is being proposed. In addition, those same parties will already have an opportunity to express their concerns, ask their questions or reassure themselves of the parameters of any proposal that affects them. This is a win-win-win situation: good for the environment and the general public; good for the government as gatekeeper and regulator; and good for proponents.

The foundations will be laid at the outset of the EA process for a more efficient and productive follow-through. Other measures will also keep the process moving smoothly along.

Tight time lines will be established through regulation for all key decisions. This will provide certainty for all participants and ensure that decisions are given in a timely fashion. We want to get a yes faster for projects that are environmentally sound and a no faster for those that are not.

New powers will be given to the minister to send contentious issues to mediation. This will help resolve issues before positions become entrenched and hardened and polarized. Again, there will be time limits on mediation. If hearings are required, the minister will be able to focus the discussion on specific outstanding issues. This should prevent delays due to endless rehashing of issues which may have already seen some level of resolution. The board's time will be used to facilitate decision-making only with regard to truly significant matters.

Finally, Bill 76 will achieve the goal of a one project, one assessment approach by giving the minister authority to harmonize EA requirements with those of other jurisdictions.

I want to list some of the recent amendments to the bill being considered today by all members of this House which came, I believe, as a result of the committee deliberations.

A key change is the additional opportunity for consultation provided by Bill 76. This covers two areas: terms of reference and orders to harmonize. This latter amendment was recommended by the opposition, and we feel it's a good one. Consultation is a key feature of the Environmental Assessment Act and we want to expand its use wherever appropriate.

We've also amended the bill to require environmental assessments when municipalities contract with third parties for waste disposal. This comes as a result of several groups and individuals who appeared before the committee with concerns that there might not have been sufficient opportunity for public input in the decision-making surrounding waste disposal. This government agrees that waste disposal is an environmentally significant activity and that it warrants an environmental assessment process.

What this amendment will not do, however, is require that municipalities get duplicate approvals for their waste disposal decisions. If, for example, they decide to use a landfill which already has a certificate of approval with sufficient capacity and a service area which allows it to take the contracted waste, no additional approval will be required for that landfill. What will have to happen is a proper consideration of alternatives such as incineration or recycling programs and of transportation methods for getting the waste to its final destination. This will give the public the opportunity to give input into how and where waste is moved through their communities.

Another change will provide for mediation without prejudice. This will mean that all parties must agree to the release of information regarding issues that have yet to be resolved. There will now be a longer transition period for using both the old and new EA processes.

Two other amendments put forward by the opposition parties which have been accepted in this bill include a provision that only Ministry of Environment and Energy employees can act as directors under the Environmental Assessment Act, and a requirement for public notice and written reasons for most decisions by the minister.

In sum, I believe the changes that have been made to Bill 76 have improved it and will lead to a better environmental assessment process for Ontario. I know this is a goal that is shared by all members of this Legislature and by all Ontarians. We look forward to continuation of this third reading debate and the vote this afternoon, and I would encourage all members of the House to support Bill 76.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Hastings: Briefly, I'd like to offer my congratulations to the member for Wellington, who has once again, as have so many other members of this caucus, put forth on the record the cost of long, protracted environmental assessment hearings. That's one of the primary rationales for changing this bill: to get some sunsetting, some outcomes into the operation instead of what the opposition parties favour, which is generally to have them go on forever — 10 years, 20 years, 30 years. I'm sure we could document the costs of the hearings. They're probably more than the initial costs of starting up a dump or a landfill. That seems to be their preference.

The other thing I would like to comment on is that there seems to be an obsession with regulation on the

other side, that if you only have more regulations for practically everything — more inspectors, more procedures, more paperwork, more of everything — somehow or other there's this bizarre concept out there that you are protecting the environment. If we just had more of everything, the environment's protected. But it comes back to the question, again, if you apply any logic: If you had that as an option, why are we having any environmental problems to deal with in the first place? You had all these bureaucrats out there. Everything should be just hunky-dory. That's what I'd call the old style of thinking which they have across the way: There isn't any other way to deal with protecting the environment except by more bureaucrats, more regulation etc.

Alternatives? It's not hard to find them. Best practices is one way; self-monitoring is another. But we couldn't have self-monitoring because that would mean — imagine — that some people who do create problems in the environment corrected them on their own to standards. No, no, we couldn't have that because we'd end up having fewer bureaucrats. So we have to have more bureaucrats, the typical old style of thinking to which they're so wedded, and will be forever.

Mr Bradley: As I know the member for Wellington would know, the old style was in fact allowing people to monitor themselves, and as a result, a lot of environmental problems existed. The people who will call for independent monitoring, monitoring by the Ministry of Environment, which is considered to be objective, are in fact the good corporate citizens, the people who will spend the money and have spent the money on the necessary equipment, on new processes which will avoid the production of contaminants, on the training of employees. They are the people who are saying, "We need government monitoring, and the reason we need that government overseeing and monitoring is because we have competitors out there who are not prepared to do those things."

1650

So in fairness to the good corporate citizens as well as the people of this province, we need a strong Ministry of Environment to carry out enforcement, monitoring activities, enforcement activities, abatement activities and research activities. Unfortunately, what the member did not mention in his speech but he must be shaking in his boots about is the potential for even more cuts to the Ministry of Environment budget and more staff being laid off.

Now, I know in the mantra of some of his colleagues — not the member himself, because he's more of a moderate, what I would say a Progressive Conservative as opposed to the Reform Party that he sits in the middle of right now — he would understand fully the importance of those people in the Ministry of Environment, the excellent staff who had a worldwide reputation. People across North America came to Ontario to see what was happening in terms of the environment because we were an environmental leader. I know the member for Wellington would want to see us restored to that position rather than moving several steps backward to the 1950s, because he is more progressive than some of his colleagues, and I expect that he'll respond positively to my suggestion.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of the member for Wellington.

When I was sitting thinking about the reaction I was having, the first thing to cross my mind was that it's nice to see Ted back active in the House and it really is unfortunate for the people of Ontario that he doesn't sit in the cabinet because I do believe he's a reasonable, honourable person. But I've got to tell you, Ted, I think the problem is that you're far too fair to be a Harris cabinet minister. You're not mean enough. You're more than willing to listen to people, and that just won't work in this cabinet —

Mr Bradley: Against the tax cuts.

Mr Christopherson: He's against the tax cuts, I'm reminded by my colleagues here. You may really need to think through where you're ultimately going to land, because to see you sitting there wasting away really is a shame.

I know that having worked with the member when he sat right over here and I was in cabinet and we worked together on a private member's bill that he brought forward that improved public safety, and I think that was a positive experience for certainly both of us as parliamentarians, and it made things better for the people of Ontario, and I suspect he ran a large part of his campaign on that successful bill that he enacted. But let me just say that the member, unfortunately, tends to follow the government line of talking about how this has improved the process and made things better. I heard some of those things coming from him.

When we take a look at the other things that this government has done, when we look at the fact that there's no longer intervenor funding, that those from the community who want to get involved have to apply at the end of a process — well, where you need tens of thousands of dollars to hire the kinds of experts to represent a community to offset the experts that the corporation may provide, who's going to spend that money not knowing until the end whether they're going to get the money back? That will have a chilling effect, as have the changes you made in Bill 20. You're about to water down the building code. You've done all kinds of changes with self-regulation, cutting red tape. You just don't believe in fighting for the environment, period.

Mr Galt: I'd like to compliment the member for Wellington for just an excellent presentation. He stayed on topic and had some excellent content.

This bill is certainly capitalizing on some 20 years of environmental assessment experience and updating the act to make it less costly, more timely and more effective. I can assure you that environmental protection remains the overriding objective of this act. The amendments have strengthened the province's Environmental Assessment Act and will make it more workable.

The public's right to a say early on in the process has been enshrined in this legislation. Early and clear direction to stakeholders on the kind of information to be included in the environmental assessment documents will provide more certainty, and that's extremely important.

Strict time frames will be adhered to for all key steps in the decision-making process. A full environmental assessment will still be required, and the key elements of

environmental assessment are maintained, including the broad definition of environment, the examination of alternatives and the Environmental Assessment Board as an independent decision-maker.

In keeping with the government's red tape review, we are saying no to duplication and overlap and are harmonizing Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act with the federal government's: one project, one process. I can assure you that we will be harmonizing to the level of the highest degree of environmental protection.

Once again I'd like to compliment the member on just an excellent presentation. We've heard so many presentations in this House from the other side where they wander all over and they curse at the government and they do everything except talk on the bill. The member for Wellington stayed right on topic. He talked about what was important in the bill, what the bill is going to do with the Environmental Assessment Act, and for that I thank him and respect him for just an excellent presentation.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Wellington has two minutes to respond.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank, first of all, the members from my side, my colleague the member for Northumberland, who also happens to be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment and Energy, and also my colleague the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, for their kind comments, and also across the aisle, the New Democrat member for Hamilton Centre for his kind comments. I certainly want to extend also my appreciation for the cooperation and help he provided on the private member's bill that I fortunately passed in the last hours of the former Parliament.

In response to the member for St Catharines, who asked me to respond positively to his expressions of concern, I hope to be able to do that. I want to reassure him, and I know the government is very committed to ensuring, that the role of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, a strong role, is maintained. Where we differ, I suppose, is we on this side accept the need for a reduction in the cost of the administration of the ministry and want to make that administration more cost-effective and efficient. We believe, and we will maintain and we will demonstrate at election time, that the environment still has been protected and that we've done it in a more efficient and cost-effective way, with less unnecessary administration. I agree that we continue to need a strong Ministry of Environment and a strong minister. I think we have that.

I also want to thank the member for his compliment, suggesting that I am a moderate person. I think that's a very nice thing for him to say. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm very pleased to be able to rise in my place today to become involved with the other members of this House in third reading of Bill 76, the environmental assessment bill, and I'm going to take a bit of a different approach. It's more of a story than a speech about some of the involvement that's behind this bill and one particular amendment. It's more than a story. Let's say it's going to be like the Hard Copy show on television, because it involves patronage, it

involves possibly corruption in this government, and I think it rivals some of the history this particular party had in the Davis era with then Premier Bill Davis and his best friend, Gerhard Moog, who just so happened to own the property across the street here where Ontario Hydro chose to build its headquarters, where it is today.

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): You don't have anything more recent than that?

Mr Ramsay: Yes, it's a very good friend. In this case it's a very good friend of the Premier who is a proponent of the Adams mine waste proposal. This particular proposal, as people would know, is one of the options that up till a few weeks ago Metropolitan Toronto was considering as a solution for its waste management problems. Up till a few weeks ago it certainly was being considered, but they have dropped that proposal and have decided to pick an American option in a short-term waste disposal option for the next four years while they work on their long-term proposals, primarily expanding the 3R programs that have been very successful across this province. Metro is certainly one of the leaders in this; most communities now in Ontario do this. They'll be looking at some other types of solutions to handle that waste.

Metro now, as we know from our daily clippings, is very frustrated by the actions of this government. It's very ironic and strange, because this was a government that campaigned, and quite frankly fulfilled that promise after the campaign, to get out of the municipal waste business — until now and until this very amendment that attaches itself to this bill. When they came into office, they decided to close down the Interim Waste Authority, which was the previous government's agency to look at Metropolitan Toronto waste. They said, "No, the provincial government has no business deciding where municipal waste should go. We're going to get out of that." They rescinded that old legislation and said, "We'll let the municipalities choose."

1700

But along comes this bill. Bill 76, "to improve environmental protection," as it says here, was first introduced for first reading on June 13, 1996, and second reading was June 25 of this year. But only three weeks ago an amendment appeared on our desks in committee in regard to municipal waste. This amendment seemed to appear out of the blue, and it only came after there were very strong signals from Metropolitan Toronto that it was about to decide to choose an American option for a short-term waste disposal contract. So the timing of this has to be suspect.

Also, when you look, this amendment is very suspect because the amendment says, in regard to municipal waste, "This section applies with respect to an undertaking by such municipalities as may be prescribed" — and of course these municipalities are not named here; this could be done in regulation, and so we don't even know what municipalities are going to be named — "where the facilities or services of another person will be used for the final disposal of waste,

- "(a) by depositing it at a dump;
- "(b) by landfilling; or
- "(c) by incineration."

The prohibition here is, "No municipality shall proceed with an undertaking to dispose of waste unless the municipality obtains approval to proceed under this act."

In committee a few weeks ago when this amendment was moved, I entered into a dialogue with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment in regard to this particular amendment. It really comes off almost in the form of a cross-examination, as if we were in a courtroom, because I had a number of questions: Where did this amendment come from? Why did the government bring it forward at this time? Did it involve the exportation of waste? Did it involve what Metro Toronto wanted to do? In the Hansard I have before me, which probably goes on for about 30 minutes, it was very difficult to get any sort of straight answer from the parliamentary assistant in this case as to what is going on here.

As we see from the daily frustrations in Metropolitan Toronto, it is like a race to the clock between the provincial government and Metro Toronto as to when this bill will be proclaimed and when this particular set of regulations will be attached to this bill. There's a race between Toronto and the province to see where this garbage will go.

We've all seen this frustration from the news clippings, but I'd like to talk a little bit about what I think is behind this. It is no secret that the proponent of the Adams mine waste proposal is a lifelong friend of the Premier, Michael Harris, the member for Nipissing. Anecdotally, people know that they've been golfing buddies. They've known each other since being teenagers. In fact, when the Premier still lived in North Bay they lived on the same street.

When in the last election campaign it looked like the polls were turning and it possibly could be a Conservative government, there was a lot of concern in my riding among the vast majority of people who like myself were opposed to this particular project. We were very concerned about the relationship the Premier had with this proponent and what he might accomplish in making sure that this project went ahead.

Up until now for those people and myself, our battle has been with Metro Toronto, to try to convince it that putting 39-plus tonnes of garbage in a fractured rock pit that sits 300 feet above the great clay belt farming area of Timiskaming is a risky business. It certainly is a risky business. But up till now our battle has been with Metro because it's been in its bailiwick, it has been its decision where to put that garbage. But all of a sudden this amendment comes forward. This is the very first time that the Harris government has now put its finger in where it said it wouldn't. It's poking into the municipal business of waste management, a place it said it wouldn't.

I'll tell you why I'm concerned about this. When I look at some of the local news clippings of the Kirkland Lake paper as this story has unfolded recently, there is a very strange optimism by Mr Gordon McGuinty of North Bay that this garbage is still going to go to the Adams mine site even though the province has dropped the Adams mine site from its short list.

I'd like to quote from the Northern Daily News — actually this would be from the Kirkland Lake Gazette, Wednesday, October 30, last Wednesday. This is after Mr

McGuinty found out that Metro had decided to drop the Adams mine proposal from the short list and to look at two waste disposal sites in the United States. Mr McGuinty is quoted here as saying, by the reporter:

"I fully intend to get Metro as a customer'....

"He said he rejects Metro's rationale for choosing American companies to landfill waste in the Detroit area....

"He suggests there's still a chance the Ontario government may prevent Toronto from sending garbage to the United States by speeding up new environmental legislation, scheduled to come into effect January 1.

"It sounds like the province is already doing that on their own" — slowing it up — "he said.

"All Metro council has decided, he said, is to short list two American companies and negotiate with them.

"They still have to ratify any contract in December," Mr McGuinty said. "If the province sticks to their guns on this, there may never be a contract signed."

I really have to wonder why the proponent of this project is so optimistic that the garbage is going to go to Kirkland Lake. I have to wonder and question if there's even more behind the scenes in this government than this particular amendment here that would allow any sort of regulation that possibly could prohibit the exportation of waste. I wonder why the government isn't up front now in its amendments or in the legislation to begin with to put the prohibition right out front, "Thou shalt not export waste out of Ontario," if that's what you really want. They're playing quite a cagey game here. They're not being frank with the people of Ontario, they're certainly not being frank with Metropolitan Toronto, and I think there's something going on behind here.

What's at stake here? What's at stake here is more than a friendship. At stake here are millions and millions of dollars, millions of dollars that one of the closest friends to the Premier has the great potential to make if Metropolitan Toronto sends its garbage to the Adams mine site.

Also, there are some other advantages to northern Ontario. There's no doubt about that and I've never disputed that. My argument has always been that those financial, economic advantages to North Bay and to my riding are not worth the risk that would be taken by putting that garbage in there. Rarely do members in this House get up in their place and say, "I'm not for those jobs in my area," because, God knows, we all want employment in our areas, but it's always been my principle that it's not jobs in any case, that sometimes one has to make a stand and say, "Yes, I acknowledge that there's an economic benefit to my area in this, but it's not worth it to the environment."

When it comes to the dumping of 39 million tonnes of garbage in a fractured rock pit 300 feet above the agricultural clay belt of Timiskaming, I don't care even what the best expert says today; it is not worth the risk, because in 20 or 30 years somebody's going to say: "I guess the system failed. We thought we could pump this leachate out for 100 or 200 years, but it looks like the leachate's gummed up the works here. We can't get down into the pit and properly repair the system that we had designed to the very best ability in 1996 or 1997." It is not worth the risk.

I'm very, very concerned about what's going on here. Not only does the Premier's friend have the potential to make millions and millions of dollars, but obviously the city of North Bay would benefit, his particular riding. The Ontario Northland Railway lost, when the Adams and Sherman iron ore mines closed in the late 1980s, its very best freight customer that provided tremendous tonnage and freightage that really kept that railway going. Now we're in a situation where the Ontario Northland Railway is desperate — and I know they're desperate — to try to find replacement haulage for that to bring the revenues up to where they can really keep the railway viable.

Having the Adams mine project means there would be a lot of jobs in North Bay, as there would be some jobs also in my riding of Timiskaming. It would certainly benefit the economy of North Bay, which is in the riding of Nipissing which is the Premier's riding. So the Premier has two very strong motives to make sure that Metropolitan Toronto does not send its garbage to the United States but sends it to Kirkland Lake. Just like Gerhard Moog when he was Bill Davis's friend and there was some property across the way here, I think the very same thing is happening here.

1710

I would say to Mr Harris, if he wants to ensure to the people of Ontario that his hands are clean on this, that before we vote on this, this amendment should be withdrawn. At the very least, if he can't do that, he should ensure that the promise that was made to me by the parliamentary assistant in the committee a few weeks ago that this bill would not be proclaimed until January 1 and that the regulations they are planning behind the scenes that would be attached to this bill that would either prohibit or build a tremendous roadblock against Metro's possible decision to export garbage to the United States — that that not happen until after January 1 in order to let Metropolitan Toronto continue with this process it has been working on for over 10 years now.

As the news clipping in today's Toronto Star said, Metro Toronto has — and you've got to have sympathy for these people, because they've been through the SWEEP process, the SWISC process, the IWA process. It was this government that said, "Let's get out of all those processes and let Metropolitan Toronto and other municipalities make their own decisions." I thought that was good: Let Metro make its decision. But now we're starting to see, and I think for a nefarious reason, the Harris government, the Conservative government of Ontario, bring a little amendment here that will permit a regulation that could absolutely take this project of Metropolitan Toronto's off the rails.

The real problem with this interference too is that what Metro Toronto is trying to do right now — and you might criticize them for exporting the waste. Like the NDP environment critic, I'd rather we solved our own problems here. I'd rather we didn't have to do this. But Toronto is in a bit of a jam here and, God love them, they've been frustrated by a Liberal government, an NDP government and now a Conservative government, so they're having a tough time and they're running out of time. A lot of the options for them, of course, are to add

some lifts to some of the dumps that are in some of the very ridings of people I see right across the way here, north of Toronto in Vaughan, or Britannia out in Mississauga.

What Toronto wants instead of looking at some megalandfill for the next 20 years is a short-term solution to give them some breathing room to get developed some long-term solution that might even involve a brand-new technology that isn't fully developed here yet today. There are all sorts of technologies beyond incineration, such as vaporization of waste, that are being experimented with now or are very close to being into commercial manufacture or production. So what they want to do is to expand the 3R system as much as they can, and they're doing a very good job of that. They need some short-term bridging to get some garbage put away for a while and they're trying to find the best place to do that, but they only need about four or five years to do that.

To develop the Adams mine site to make it viable, to develop the huge transfer station that's going to have to be built here in Toronto, to establish and build and construct and get the approvals for the infrastructure, the whole leachate containment system in the Adams mine pit, is going to take a few more years and multimillion dollars. In order to do that, the proponents of the Adams mine project need a long-term contract. To really make that viable, if it is viable at all, they will need 10 to 20 years. That's one very good reason why Metropolitan Toronto has dropped them from its list at this time, because Metropolitan Toronto doesn't need a 20-year solution at this time. It needs a short-term solution to give them some breathing room to work on all of the different alternatives they have before them and that the people down here and their council wish to pursue. I think that's important and they deserve that opportunity. I think they deserve that opportunity without interference from the provincial government. That's very important.

Unfortunately, there's a lot of pressure up in my riding, of course, for this proposal to go ahead. It has certainly been sold to many people in Kirkland Lake. It's literally been sold through share offerings and through other people there who feel it would be an economic benefit to the people of Kirkland Lake, as a straw is handed, passed out, to a drowning person.

We in northern Ontario, especially in the riding of Timiskaming after those two iron ore mines closed in the late 1980s, are very desperate for employment. We have an extremely high unemployment rate in our area. We are certainly desperate for any sort of development. So I can understand why many people, when this project first was introduced, would grasp it like a drowning person would a straw being handed out. But I think it only is a straw, because I don't really think it's the true, strong, sustainable development that would get us through the next boom-and-bust cycle of gold mining.

In fact, when the project was first proposed, it was a very different project than is on the table today. It was a project that said Metro Toronto would ship all of its garbage up to the Adams mine site and there would be a sorting plant there. All the wealth that is in a full waste stream would be sorted out and that wealth would stay in our area and we would be able to generate industries

from that wealth. At first blush, it didn't look that bad, it looked kind of interesting, that we would return some of the wealth that we've always shipped to the south. Some of that, in the form of waste, however distasteful, might come back here and we might be able to develop something from it.

But what has happened now is that basically it has ended up only as a residual waste site. What that means, and it's something I've always been against, is that it's just going to be a dump. It's just going to be a dumping ground, a dumping pit, for what's left in the waste stream after all the waste has been removed.

What we have here basically is a project in the 1950s style. It's one of the last megaprojects that I think time has passed by. Time has passed it by, and the politics and the technology of waste management have passed it by. This is something of the 1950s where we were in a big consumer society and we were into real planned obsolescence and the more we could consume and the more waste we had the better. Those were sort of the principles of the day.

We live in a very different era today. We understand that we have to conserve and that we shouldn't be wasting and that we should try to derive value back from the waste stream. So we don't need the megaproject here. I think Metro, wisely, has understood that. Metro, quite frankly, has paid a lot of attention to a lot of the people who, I will say, through surveys that I have done through every household in the whole area that the proponent has decided is the catchment area for this mine — the vast majority of the people in the dump catchment area and the whole region are very much against this project. I support them in that and I think Metro has listened to that. We have been to Metropolitan Toronto. We have talked to them about that, that we are not pleased with that.

What's very interesting about this project is that in the public liaison committee meetings and the public liaison committee meeting funded by Metro Toronto, they hired a consultant from California who said: "You know, you probably could make this project work if you went about it another way. If you put some more money into it, you engineered it differently and you made sure the moneys were there for contingency plans and worst-case scenarios, you might be able to do it." So here was an expert saying you probably could do it if you did it like this. But he said the way that Notre Development is pursuing this project is irresponsible, that it is not planning for any worst-case scenario, that it is dangerous and that the people of the region should be alarmed by this particular proposal.

I'm alarmed by it. I'm very concerned about it. It better not be the case that this government is interfering with the democratic decisions of Metropolitan Toronto, of how they want to dispose of their waste. If you are interfering, it better not be the case that you're doing that because the Premier is a very good friend of the proponent and the proponent has the potential to make millions of dollars from this and the Premier's own riding will definitely benefit economically from this. I hope that's not the case. I hope that you're not interfering and I hope it's not for those reasons, because it's not worth sacrific-

ing the environment for anything — for money or for jobs. We should not take a chance on this sort of scheme. It is not worth it, because a scheme is what it is. It's a scheme being promoted by a snake oil salesperson who's been running the roads in my area for seven years, and we're sick and tired of it. Metro Toronto has seen it for what it is and they've decided it isn't going there. I'm putting this government on warning: You'd better not interfere with that because you'll have hell to pay in the riding of Timiskaming.

1720

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'd like to compliment the member for Timiskaming for his wise words and I think the cautionary tale he was telling in terms of what this specific amendment would mean. It's a warning to the members of the government that this bill is being set up probably to be quite deceptive.

I had the honour of sitting on the committee that travelled the province this summer studying Bill 76 and a couple of things became very clear: The priority is not the protection of our environment but is in essence for control of the decisions by cabinet and by the ministers themselves. The cruel irony of this bill is that one part of it says it's to enshrine public consultation, and the real truth is — this came out quite frequently during the public hearings — this will actually reduce the opportunity for the public to get involved. Delegation after delegation made that point.

The member for Northumberland and I think the member for Scarborough West were on the hearings. I recall very well people saying in essence that by looking very carefully at the bill it's clear that the minister will have complete control. The fact is that this bill broadens the cabinet's power to exempt projects from the need to have environmental assessments. It gives the minister the power to limit what the Environmental Assessment Board can examine without saying what principles must govern the decisions. It continues the premise of allowing the minister to define what is a major commercial or business enterprise through internal policy guidelines and thereby decree what projects must undergo environmental assessments instead of placing a definition in the Environmental Assessment Act.

This bill is a deception, and I think the people of Ontario need to know that this is not a question of allowing people more public consultation and it's not a question of the environment being the priority. It's a question of simply controlling the number of regulations.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): What a startling revelation as you begin hypothetically, and I hope it's only that, to piece the puzzle together. The good, vigilant watch by the member for Timiskaming brings forth the name of Gordon McGuinty, a lifelong friend of the Premier, a golf buddy — they share many hours — owner of the now defunct Adams mine. Mr McGuinty is one of the main garbage kings and, you see, he found a site where people can dispose of garbage. He's very close to the Premier. We don't wish to impute motive but we will be like sentries at our post. We will be watching very carefully and meticulously the partnership, the

friendship of those two people, Gordon McGuinty and Premier Mike Harris, the Premier du jour when it comes to the disposal of garbage.

Mr Speaker, you've followed the debate year after year and you know that the people of the north do not wish to get Toronto's garbage. We don't want the garbage to leave the 416 and 905 areas of Toronto and its surroundings, its suburbs, and move all the way to northern Ontario and jeopardize our quality of life. We don't wish to have it. The member for Timiskaming has said: "Toronto, snap out of it. Keep your garbage." I want to commend the member for —

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired.

Mr Tilson: The member for Timiskaming spent a great deal of time on the amendment which requires that environmental assessments be required for waste being sent out of the province. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with requiring environmental assessments for transfer stations, transportation, all other matters with respect to sending waste to the United States? What aversion do you have to that?

I suppose as a Liberal — I mean, we haven't forgotten Whitevale. We haven't forgotten your short-term alternative with respect to Whitevale which required no environmental assessment, absolutely no environmental assessment for Whitevale. So I find it a little strange, the member for Timiskaming — he normally gives a good speech, although he stood up on this issue before, and I have to remind him of Whitevale, I really do, because we on this side do care about the environment, whether waste is being put in a landfill site or whether it's being put in an incinerator. We all remember the former environment minister from the NDP giving testimony down in Detroit. There are facts of all of the stuff floating back into Canada. So what's wrong with having an environmental assessment? I'm rather surprised that he would take that position.

We are simply requiring that the municipalities continue to have the local option for whatever it may be, whether it be a landfill site, whether it be an energy-from-waste facility, whether it be a composting facility, whether it be all of the various alternatives that are continuing to be looked at. We simply say, have an environmental assessment, whether that be on long term or short term. We cannot risk destroying the environment by simply allowing municipalities to do whatever they wish. You must do it safely.

Mr Bradley: I suppose the member for Timiskaming didn't mention Whitevale because he knew that it would have to go through an environmental assessment process indeed, and that's why he would not have mentioned it; he would have assumed that that was the case, and indeed that was the case. I know the member for Dufferin-Peel never wants to mislead the House because he's not noted for doing that, so I'll just make that correction because I get to speak after him. I guess that's the best time to be able to do it.

I'm glad the member alerted us to the fact that there could be something happening in his constituency behind closed doors. I think he was worried that somehow something might happen behind closed doors and the fix might be in. He simply wanted to alert the House to that

and the people of this province. He's done a service to the people of his constituency by alerting us to that possibility. We hope that doesn't happen, quite obviously. I'm not one who would direly predict that would happen but I'm glad he did alert us to that.

I'm wondering whether the reason that he feels this way is he's looking at a pattern in the Ministry of Environment now where the power of the ministry is being withdrawn, where, when there are cabinet decisions to be made or government decisions to be made, we're back to the old days where the Ministry of Environment is elbowed out of the way instead of playing a prominent role in the environmental assessment process or in the entire environmental process. I think that may be his concern, that in response to those who show up at the Conservative fund-raisers, the wealthy and the privileged, who want to develop anywhere and everywhere, that somehow the environmental process might be compromised, and I'm wondering if the member would comment on that concern I have.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timiskaming, you have two minutes.

Mr Ramsay: I'd like to thank the members who followed my speech with their comments and questions. I appreciate the member for St Catharines couching the tenor of my speech as a warning because that's certainly what it is. I think the eyes of all Metropolitan Toronto politicians and bureaucrats are certainly going to be watching what this government does after this bill receives third reading vote, how fast they move on royal proclamation of this, whether they break the promise of the parliamentary assistant who said it certainly wouldn't be proclaimed until January 1. The other promise that was made is that the municipalities, and in this case especially Metropolitan Toronto, would be consulted before those regulations were attached to this bill. We're going to be watching that to see if you're going to fast-track that or if you're going to carry on with that schedule.

I think you have a chance to keep your word and if you do that, then I would say and I would admit that I was wrong, that what I said here in my place today was wrong, if you do that. But we're watching. Because if you move quickly, as I suspect you're going to do, and ironically as Mr McGuinty feels you're going to do, because he is extremely confident that this garbage is not going to the United States. I just don't understand why he feels so confident. He's said this in the newspaper, so something is afoot here and I think something's amiss. But we'll see in the next few weeks.

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Interjection.

Mr Ramsay: The member for Dufferin-Peel said I should be more trusting, so I will put my trust in you today, in all the members of the Legislature on the Conservative side, in the government, to see if you hold your word that this bill will only be proclaimed on January 1 and allow Metro to finish its process that it's been involved in over the last 12 years.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to split the remainder of my time with my leader.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I take it it's agreed?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. I've only got about 15 minutes or so to go through what is, by its very volume, a fairly large and comprehensive bill put forward by the government. The bill, so we can keep on topic here, is Bill 76.

It always amazes me that each bill this government brings into this place is always accompanied by a title that has absolutely nothing to do with the bill. In this particular case the bill is entitled An Act to improve environmental protection, increase accountability and enshrine public consultation in the Environmental Assessment Act. Well, if you take a look at the contents of this bill in regard to what it says, you'll find that the bill does not deliver. The bill should have been more appropriately entitled An Act to dismantle environmental protection, decrease accountability and kick the public out of the consultation process. I think that would have been more in keeping with what we find inside the bill. This is just another example of how the Tory communications machine within the Premier's office is always trying to find any way it can to communicate its message. Unfortunately, what's inside this bill is quite contrary to what we find in the title of the bill.

I'd like to go through a couple of parts, because I don't have the time to go through the entirety of the bill. I'd like, for the record, to state some of the views canvassed from people within the environmental community and also from people within the riding of Cochrane South.

The first section of the bill, under section 2, clause 3.1(1)(b) and subsection 3.1(2) of the act, reads:

"(b) if the minister considers the requirements imposed by the other jurisdiction to be equivalent to the requirements imposed under this act.

"(2) The minister may by order vary or dispense with a requirement imposed under this act...."

What it means to say is that they're trying to harmonize both federal and provincial legislation when it comes to the environment. That in itself, on the surface, would sound like not a bad idea. The problem, however, is that what they're really doing here is driving it to the lowest common denominator. If federal legislation is weaker, that is where Ontario is going to position itself when it comes to an issue having to do with the environment and a matter before an environmental tribunal.

Quite simply what they're doing is following the direction of the American legislation where, if the state legislation is weaker and the federal government has something under its control, it follows the weaker legislation, and vice versa. What we're seeing here quite frankly is an Americanization of legislation in Ontario.

It has always been understood that in Canada what you have is an ability by the provinces to start setting some of the direction and start setting some of the way that policy needs to be developed. Rather than always trying to work it towards the lowest common denominator, provinces have had the ability to introduce legislation and to build on legislation from other jurisdictions and from the federal government.

A good example of that would be the legislation having to do with health care. When one province — Saskatchewan — started a system of health care, every other province tried to ratchet itself up to the standard set up in Saskatchewan. Ever since then, each province has worked within the federation to try to enhance our health care system by that provision.

What we're doing in this act is quite the opposite. We're saying, "Whatever the lowest common denominator is when it comes to the environment, those are the rules Ontario will play by." I say that's not a good thing for the environment. I would even argue it is not a good thing for the economy as well.

Under section 3.2 of the act, we have a clause here that basically — this is really the guts of the bill. The bill in the title tries to say that it's to "increase accountability and enshrine public consultation." Well, if you take a look at this, what section 3.2 simply does is it allows the minister to exempt certain classes of businesses from going through an environmental assessment. That's dangerous stuff.

What that allows, quite frankly, is if somebody has an in with the government, somebody has an in with the minister, a proponent of a project has an in with the Premier, what you do is you snuggle up real close to the minister, you snuggle up to the Premier, and you say, "Hey, Premier" — or Minister of Environment — "I've been reading this legislation and I see under this particular legislation that you have the right" — as read here, "With the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council or of such ministers of the crown as the Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate, the minister may by order...declare that this act, the regulations or a matter provided under the act does not apply with respect to a proponent, a class of proponents, an undertaking or a class of undertakings."

What, quite frankly, that means is that it gives the power to the minister and to the cabinet to say: "My buddy in the business sector has got a project that wants to go forward and we don't want to stand in the way. I want you to invoke the powers so that they don't have to fall under the environmental assessment."

I say to the government, that is not good business practice, number one, and it's certainly not good environmental practice. Because the one thing I hear over and over again when I deal with the private sector within my riding and within the greater province of Ontario is they say: "We want to understand the rules. We want to know that the rules are clear and they apply the same to everyone. Not one person is treated differently before the law."

What this allows you to do is to say, if you're a business with an in to the Premier's office or to the Minister of Environment or some other influential member within the government, you can be treated differently than somebody who doesn't have an in. I say that is the worst system of politics and the worst system of government that you can see happen. It's a little bit like Alabama. You know, if you know the governor, nudge, nudge, wink, wink, whatever you want goes through.

Mr Pouliot: Pay, pay, pay.

Mr Bisson: And pay, pay, pay, as the member for Lake Nipigon says.

Quite frankly, I wasn't going to get into that, but the danger is that what could end up happening is that the Minister of Environment and the government can very simply put themselves in a position where a business says, "Rather than give \$150 to the Tory fund-raiser, I'll buy a section of tables or I will buy a number of tables and give \$10,000, \$20,000, \$50,000 to the Tories," and end up being in a position before the government so it can be exempted under the act. I say that is really dangerous.

I ask again, what does the business sector want? The business sector wants to know what the rules are. They want the rules to be clear, they want them to be fair, but more important, they want them to apply the same among all businesses in Ontario and not give special consideration based on which cabinet minister you know and the availability you have to patronize the Tory party through fund-raisers. I think that's very dangerous stuff.

As a short example, I grew up in a place called Kamiskotia Lake. There is a huge environmental disaster at Kamiskotia Lake called the tailings dams at the Kamiskotia mine. That happened because of these exact provisions, because during the Second World War and leading up to it the government needed copper to supply the war effort. The mine applied for a permit to build a tailings dam and the government of Ontario knew at the time that it was not in keeping with even the known technologies of that day to keep the tailings dam safe. What did the government do? They said, "We're going to turn a blind eye to our own rules and we're going to allow it to go forward." The long-term environmental impact of that decision is still being felt today.

You cannot fish on the Kamiskotia River as the water leaves the lake and goes out into the river system because it's full of tailings. It has been leached from the tailings ponds within the Kamiskotia mine, has been so since about the mid-1970s, and has killed all of that area when it comes to fishing south of the Kamiskotia Lake, or going out to the eastern part, and it was this kind of provision that allowed it to happen.

I say to the government, you're really opening up a bees' nest here and you're really opening up a problem that is going to allow a whole bunch of environmental disasters to perpetuate themselves within Ontario.

Another part of the act under section 6 is quite interesting as well, and again it has nothing to do with the title of the bill. If anything, it is quite the opposite. It goes on to say under subsection 6(1): "The proponent shall give the ministry proposed terms of reference governing the preparation of an environmental assessment for the undertaking."

What does that mean? That means quite simply that again, as in the previous section, if you're friends of the Premier or you're friends of the Minister of Environment or you have an in with the Tory party because you give good dollars to their Tory fund-raisers, you're going to be able to dictate, with the approval of the minister, what are going to be the terms of reference to your EA should you need to go through an environmental assessment. That's what it means.

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I understand the government is saying, "We want to make things simpler for the business sector," but nobody

had an idea that simpler meant what you guys are really up to here, because what you're about is giving Tory fund-raisers a blank cheque on the back of the environment. That's what this is all about. It has absolutely nothing to do with trying to protect the environment, as in the title of the bill. It says, "If you have bucks and you want to buy favour with the Minister of the Environment, here's the legislation that will let you have it." That's exactly what this legislation is doing.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: The members on the other side can grumble all they want, but the reality is what it says. It says, "The proponent shall give" — the proponent is who? It's the person with the application — "the ministry" and the minister "proposed terms of reference governing the preparation of an environmental assessment for the undertaking," and subs (a), (b) and (c) spell out what that is. I say it's pretty dangerous stuff.

Another example is in the city of Timmins. There was a project that was supposed to go under way which was a reclamation of tailings on the old McIntyre tailings stack at Pearl Lake. At the time, under the Peterson government, the then Minister of the Environment, James Bradley, required that certain provisions had to be followed according to the Environmental Assessment Act and permits to be able to get the permit to go forward and start that project. In the end, because there was a significant number of jobs to be possibly created through this project, the ministry and the municipality waived certain restrictions. We plugged that hole afterwards, but the government basically allowed that to go forward.

The reality is that less than two or three years after that project got started, there were no more jobs to be found on that project because the place shut down, there was a whole huge environmental disaster that we're still having to live with in the middle of the city of Timmins, where the old tailings dam used to be, there's a huge pond of water there that is where the tailings dam is and it's quite filthy; in fact we had to build a fence around it so people couldn't see it. Why? Because we allowed people to go forward with it just on the basis of the economics and creating jobs.

Sometimes that's what an environmental assessment tries to spell out. It looks at, should this project go forward, and balances it against the needs of protecting the environment and the need to create jobs. In this particular case, I would say under current regulations that project would have never gone ahead, and neither should it have, quite frankly.

It goes on to say under section 3.2 that the minister may — oh, no, I've already gone through this. I wanted to go up to section 4 to section 8, which is the section of the bill that deals with mediation. I just want to give the government credit on the one part of the bill that I do agree with, although I think there are problems in what you're doing. It is not a bad idea to try to deal with mediation when it comes to issues of dispute. I think there are appropriate terms to be able to do that. I can tell you in many, many cases that I've seen, that I've had to deal with as a member, where there were issues having to deal with how the ministry had dealt with a particular issue or how the private proponent had dealt with the

particular issue, it's not a bad idea to be able to move forward with some form of mediation to be able to deal with that.

The problem is when you go into the fine print of what you're doing with the mediation services, it's littered — and I use the word "littered" in this environmental bill — with all kinds of loopholes that the ministry can set up in order to be able to make a bad thing worse. For example, under subsection 8(1) it's the minister and solely the minister who appoints the mediators. I think there needs to be some kind of a public process. We've seen the same thing in the Courts of Justice Act, where the minister responsible for the courts, the AG, gave himself the entire power to appoint the case masters. It's very much the same case over here. The government is saying, "We're going to appoint the people to hear the mediation, and only we, the government, will be able to appoint those people." The danger with that is if you have a pro-business government like we have today with the Conservatives, they will go and appoint their friends, and their friends will be the ones to make the decisions, and guess what? The decisions are going to reflect what the government wants. There needs to be some sort of public accountability in this process, and I don't see that in what this government is doing.

The other thing is, and I understand the logic behind this, but I just want to point out — there's a bit of a danger here; it's a double-edged sword — that under subsection 8(5), unless the mediator decides otherwise, the mediation is not open to the public. I understand why you want to keep mediation closed; I don't argue with that point. But what I'm saying is by taking many of these issues and throwing them into mediation, there is a bit of a danger of removing from the public the whole question of accountability, of how we go forward in being able to approve particular projects within the Ministry of Environment when it comes to environmental assessments.

In the couple of minutes I have left I will say this: Under subsection 9(3), "The minister may direct the board to hear testimony concerning only those matters that the minister specifies, and the board shall do so." What they're getting at here is that only what the Minister of Environment spells out as being the terms of reference for environmental assessment will the board deal with in its final ruling. It doesn't prevent the board from hearing other submissions but limits it to what it can rule on based on what the minister puts in the environmental assessment directions in the first place. That is dangerous. It goes back to the point that the Minister of Environment, the Premier and the powerful cabinet ministers of Ontario will be able to direct which projects get approved, not on an environmental basis but on the basis of, are you a good friend to the Tory party and do you give money to the Conservative Party?

It goes on to say under subsection 9(8), "The board shall make its decision by the deadline the minister specifies or by such later date as the minister may permit if he or she considers that there is a sufficient reason." The problem with that comes down to the fact that we have already fired one third of the people who work at the Ministry of Environment. They are not able to deal

with the applications coming before them now. They're about to fire a whole bunch more people at the Ministry of Environment. The minister has put on the altar of the Minister of Finance his ministry for cuts because he knows this government does not believe in environmental regulation, and we're about to lose probably another third of the existing Ministry of Environment.

How in heck are you ever going to meet the guidelines set out under this legislation? You won't be, is the point, and you're going to end up with very shoddy decisions on the basis of the ministry's not being able to respond to all the matters brought before it because it won't have the staff to deal with them. What you're going to end up with in the end is a system filled with problems on the basis of not being able to deal properly with the matters before it.

I'd like to give the remainder of my time to my leader, Howard Hampton, who would like to close off debate.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I thank the member for Cochrane South for the opportunity to say a few words about what I regard as another one of this government's large mistakes. We understand all too well what is really happening here. The government, through its phoney tax scheme, is giving away a lot of money to its wealthy friends, so it's got to find a way to recoup some money. We saw earlier in this place that this government is willing to ignore the involvement of organized crime with video slot machines because they need the money. Here they're willing to ignore environmental destruction and environmental degradation so that some of their friends can make a quick buck, because they need the money.

There is nothing in this bill that is about environmental protection, that speaks to environmental integrity. It is all about this government trying to find a way for their corporate friends to make a quick buck at the expense of the environment. They hope to keep some of their friends happy by allowing them to make a quick buck at the expense of the environment.

What this government, through this bill and through its other legislation on the environment, is going to create over time is an environmental deficit. I don't expect any of them to be concerned about an environmental deficit. They're more concerned with short-term results. If somebody else has to come in and clean up the mess 10 or 15 years from now they won't be around to worry about it, believe me. People can be sure of that. None of this crew will be around to worry about it. Someone else will have to come in and clean up the environmental deficit this crew is going to leave behind.

What do I mean by an environmental deficit? Let me give you an example. I use this example a lot because it's the one place where this government is really hanging out. One of the places this government thinks it's going to make a quick buck is off our forests. They have essentially privatized Ontario's crown forests. They have essentially said to the private forest companies in Ontario: "You could go out there. You're in charge now. You could even monitor yourselves. You can volunteer to come in and tell us when you have degraded the forest environment or when you've degraded the lakes and streams. We don't have enough people any more to even check up on you, so you're in charge out there."

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It's quite true that this is going to open up the opportunity for some people in the forest industry to make a quick buck. It will. Some people will make a quick buck in the forest industry out of this. But what is waiting not very far down the road, and with some certainty, is that this is all going to come crashing down. Let me explain why that will be.

There are some private companies operating in the forest industry that will take all of this environmental room and will actually behave responsibly. Some of them will actually put money into forest renewal, some of them will put money into ecological studies, some of them will put money into fish and wildlife studies, and some of them will actually do a good job, both on the forestry front and on the environmental front. But others, which share this government's attitude, will say: "We're not going to spend any money on fish and wildlife. We're not going to spend all the money we should on forest renewal. We're not going to spend all the money we should looking at some of these environmental issues. We're simply going to take the money and run."

My fear is that that's going to get all of us in trouble. That's going to get us in trouble because we have to sell many of our products internationally. We have to sell them internationally into markets like California, New York and Europe. Many of those jurisdictions — and this government doesn't want to hear this — are very concerned about environmental issues, very concerned about leaving behind an environment that is sustainable for succeeding generations.

I predict what's going to happen, and it may take four or five years, is that they will see the kind of environmental degradation that this government is prepared to allow in Ontario, and they will say: "We are not prepared to buy forest products from a government, from a jurisdiction, that allows this to happen. We're not prepared to buy pulp. We're not prepared to buy paper. We're not prepared to buy lumber. We're not prepared to buy manufactured forest products." We will be in a situation like a boycott.

Some of the Conservative members who have never done anything much more than run a hamburger stand think that you can run the environment like you run a hamburger stand. Let me tell you something. This government is going to repeat the mistakes of the Social Credit government in British Columbia. They're going to wind up having much of our natural resource exports and many of our natural resource products boycotted by other jurisdictions. You're going to cost this province not thousands of jobs but tens of thousands of jobs, and you're going to cost this province literally billions lost in exports. That's what's going to happen. That is what environmental deficits mean. That is what environmental degradation means.

I know that none of the Conservatives want to hear any of this. They would like to pretend that the environment is something like workers: You simply kill the legislation governing worker health and safety, you gut the legislation covering workers' compensation, you lower the standards and you say, "Get out of here." But I'll tell you something. The environment doesn't work

that way. The fact of the matter is that Ontario has to export into an international marketplace, and it's an international marketplace that is more and more concerned about observing environmental standards, more and more concerned about environmental sustainability, and they will boycott you. They will boycott your products. They will boycott you in other ways in the international market.

The end result of your quick-buck philosophy, the end result of your philosophy of environmental deficits, is that you're going to kill jobs, you're going to kill economic activity, you're going to put all kinds of communities in worse shape.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): When's that going to happen?

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I wouldn't mind, if the member wants to heckle, if you could put him back in his seat. But if you put him back in his seat, people from the Kitchener-Waterloo area might recognize that the government's going to gut a hospital in his home town just like this government gutted 600 jobs in his home town.

Interjection: The government didn't gut any jobs; that's below the belt.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There's only a few minutes left. Try to remain calm, composed.

Mr Hampton: What this government has to recognize is that the foundations of our economy, the foundations of our communities, the foundations of our society are not based on phony tax schemes. They're based on a true realization of environmental sustainability. They're based on good public investments that increase and assist productivity. They're based on good human, community and physical infrastructure, which, like the environment, this government is prepared to write down. If you look at this government's environmental agenda, it is very much like its health care agenda, its education agenda, its social development agenda: It is one of cutting, it is one of destroying, it is one of decimating the fundamental building blocks of our communities and the fundamental building blocks of our economy.

The government members may not want to hear this. I predict that your environmental degradation, your environmental deregulation, will get you some quick bucks, but it's also going to get you and this province's economy into a lot of trouble down the road. It will hurt this province in terms of our environmental sustainability, it will hurt us in terms of our economic sustainability, it will hurt us in terms of the kind of social and community cohesion we really need if we're going to be productive in the 21st century.

You may want to move ahead and do this; you're the government. Again, on this legislation, as with all other legislation, we can tell you're not listening to anyone but your corporate friends. Anyone else who has anything to say about environmental issues, about natural resource sustainability, you're not listening to. You're simply listening to your fat-cat corporate friends. That's whose agenda you're implementing here. But I'll tell you something, there's a whole bunch of people who are not going to take this, who are not going to swallow this.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pouliot: I won't take the full two minutes. One can hardly remain seated after the most sincere and committed address I have heard for a long time. To have to notice the kind of reaction, the kind of ridicule, the kind of ill-timed comments directed at my leader when all he was doing was reminding them, warning them and telling the truth regarding the environment — many of the citizens don't have a voice, or in front of those people who have money they say little. When confronted with the logic, or the lack of logic, of these people they are quite often frightened.

We're talking about the air that we breathe; we're talking about the way a river flows; we're talking about a pristine, clean environment — not to be discarded for the mere sake of a buck. My leader has warned the public of Ontario of the real chance of having payola, where by virtue of a partnership among people the environment will be on the back burner and the prevailing factor will be the ability to pay. That's what he said. The people out there are listening. They're concerned. May they never be frightened.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): They should have been concerned —

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York Mills.

Mr Pouliot: Those people who, one by one, will not stand up will have to carry the guilt unfortunately. Hopefully, not too much damage will be done by the time you leave office.

Mr Turnbull: We know your conduct and —

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York Mills, order.

Mr Pouliot: That is the only environmental change that would benefit the province of Ontario. They won't listen to anything else. Thank you, leader.

Mr Bradley: We're going to be voting on this briefly, but I'll get my comment in, if it's possible to do so and still vote. I want to compliment the member for Cochrane South on his usual very balanced presentation on this matter, along with his colleague the member for Rainy River, who recognized what this bill is all about. I'm going to ask the member for Rainy River, if we get around to responding to this all right, which we may or may not, whether he feels that what the government is doing will go over well at the Tory fund-raisers. I know that among many of the people I speak to who don't attend the Conservative fund-raisers this is not as popular, but I'm wondering if he believes that indeed it is going to be the case that at the Conservative fund-raisers this may well be popular.

It is obvious this is going to pass this afternoon — there will be a vote held — and there will be regulations coming after this. I'm wondering if either of the two previous speakers — one of them is going to respond — feels that there is reason to be concerned about the regulations that are written to go with the bill, because what the public often doesn't realize is that there's a bill that they can examine, and it may look fairly benign, but there are regulations that go with it, and those regulations are drawn up behind closed doors in the secrecy of the government back rooms. I'm wondering whether there's concern when it isn't before the people of this province through the parliamentary channel but rather in the back

rooms of the government. That's where my concerns would be. I'm wondering if in the total context of the environmental record of this government that's enough to cause him considerable concern.

The Deputy Speaker: The leader of the third party, you have two minutes, or the member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: I got up first, Mr Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to thank the people who commented on the speeches by both myself and the leader of my party. In regard to the member for St Catharines, yes, I went on at length to point out to the people watching this debate that indeed what this does is give Tory party fund-raisers a blank cheque to go out and talk to the business sector and say: "Look at what we've done for you. We've allowed you to exempt yourself from environmental assessment. We have allowed the minister to spell out what will be part of an environmental assessment and have given the minister and the Premier much more power than people who are environmentalists would ever be comfortable with."

I pointed out diligently, as the member well knows, that what this means is that the Tory fund-raisers will be extremely busy after this legislation and will put those people in the province who are not Tories in a funny situation because it will set up basically two classes of businesses. If you're a business that's willing to patronize the government by giving it money, you will get better treatment before the minister; if you don't, you won't. That is a real problem.

To the member from Nipigon, as always, right on topic. He points out something that's quite interesting, which is, as I've noted of late, that the Tory caucus is getting much more agitated and much more vocal in its opposition to some of the comments put forward by the opposition parties. That tells me they are going back to their constituency and are getting it right between the eyes. Their constituents are saying: "We don't like what you're doing. We thought we were voting for a party that was going to do some good." But you're fighting with absolutely everybody out there on every front and you're starting to get the friction. You come into this Legislature and I see you guys angst at every opportunity you have when members such as the leader of the third party get up and make comments that are right on. That only tells me: Keep it up people. You're getting to the Tories. Keep the pressure on. They're starting to figure out that not all is well in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr Galt has moved third reading of Bill 76. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1805.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
117	4925	2	8	Constance Lake and Newpost, all of this trying to repre-

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, Elinor	Oriole	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général et du ministre des Services correctionnels
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Chiarelli, Robert	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cooke, David S.	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (agriculture and food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
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Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	parliamentary assistant (energy) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Énergie) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Seniors Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé
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Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
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Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
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Laughren, Floyd	Nickel Belt	ND	
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Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	
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Marland, Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Miclash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupatello, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William	Eglinton	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant (colleges and universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 5 November 1996

Mardi 5 novembre 1996

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 November 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 novembre 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN VIETNAM VETERANS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): Between the years 1960 and 1975 approximately 40,000 Canadians joined the United States armed forces, many subsequently going to Vietnam. We now know of about 100 Canadians who were killed while serving in southeast Asia; another seven are listed as missing in action.

In the past several years Canadians who served in Vietnam have begun to form self-help groups to help each other and the families of those who did not return from southeast Asia. One of the main aims of these groups has been to have a memorial to those Canadians who paid the supreme sacrifice. Many of these family members cannot make the trip to Washington, DC, to see the memorial to their family member that is there, and they should be able to honour and remember their family member who did not return from southeast Asia in their own country, Canada.

For this reason, the Canadian Vietnam veterans wish to build a national memorial in Ottawa. Our government has land at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa. Canadian Vietnam veterans are now asking for the support of all MPPs in obtaining this land in Ottawa. I trust that Canadian Vietnam veterans will have the support for this land and monument from all three parties in order for them to accomplish their dream.

EDUCATION REFORM

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have here a number of letters from constituents in my riding who are very concerned about the so-called education reform that the minister keeps hinting about and we keep hearing rumours about. They are feeling very worried about the future of their children's education. They continue writing to me and writing to the minister and they still have not been involved in any way in the process of this so-called reform.

The minister, in the early days as the new minister, said to his staff that he wanted to create a crisis. That's what he's done, all right. He knew he had to find a lot of money, and now we hear that another \$1 billion has to come out of the education system. But Metro representation on the committee that decided how to handle financing was not even there; there was no representation.

I also have a letter here from the chair of the Toronto Board of Education, David Moll. He starts his letter by saying:

"For months, rumours and insinuations about education have been seeping out of Queen's Park like toxic waste.

"The result: a thoroughly demoralized staff, confused students and parents and a waste of valuable time."

He goes on to say that he has been a lifelong Conservative but that he is not supportive of what this government is doing on education in this province.

WORKFARE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I want to inform members of the House today that the Liberal Party flip-flop we saw during the past election campaign is alive and well in their leadership race.

On the issues of welfare reform and workfare, the member for Windsor-Walkerville says, "We have to look at programs that will help erase the cycle of dependency and return to meaningful work in the economy." It sounds like he is endorsing workfare. On the other hand, he says, "Workfare is dumb and simplistic." He is flip-flopper number one.

The member for York South, on the other hand, admitted that his party lost the welfare discussion in the last election because "We were not prepared to take a stand." We all know where he stands. Like a true Liberal, he wants to put more money into welfare. That is what he told a legislative committee on March 6, 1990. Even though the member for York South admitted that "Nobody wants to see someone get something for nothing," he says that "Workfare does not work." Flip-flopper number two.

But there is one Liberal who supports us. The member for Downsview said, "There is no doubt that the system needs to be reformed." Absolutely right, and our government is reforming welfare and ending the abuse so that money remains to be put into the hands of the most needy.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): The Ontario Hospital Association annual general meeting is being held in Toronto this week. The message from hospitals across the province is clear: They cannot cope with the \$1.3 billion in cuts to their hospital budgets. Those cuts to our hospitals have already resulted and will continue to result in serious problems of access and quality for patients in Ontario. The health minister must not ignore these problems.

As hospitals struggle to meet the Harris government's \$1.3 billion in cuts, nurses who provide essential care are being laid off; 15,000 nurses is a realistic estimate of service cuts. Patient care is suffering. Health services are declining. We see services such as chiropody being moved out of hospitals to clinics where patients are being

forced to pay. I worry that we will see a rise in infection rates in our hospitals as housekeeping budgets are slashed and our hospitals become dirtier.

Our communities, patients, sick people are being hurt by the cuts that the Conservative government is making to our health care. I, on behalf of the hospitals and their patients across this province, call on the government to eliminate the announced 6% and 7% cuts to hospital budgets planned over the next two years. Stop your cuts before irreversible damage is done to our hospitals throughout Ontario.

1340

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): My belief is that Ontarians believe that the two most important services they have are health care and education. This government has created chaos in both.

Let's take a look at health care: The hospitals have been cut by \$1.3 billion; there have been thousands of layoffs; there have been service cuts; waiting lists are growing again. There's been a major decline in public confidence in our hospital system due to the cuts of this government.

Doctors' negotiations have been botched. One day the minister attacks doctors, the next day he praises them, and then he can't understand why his agreement wasn't approved by the doctors. The doctors of this province don't trust the minister, and they don't respect the minister.

In education, there has been \$400 million worth of cuts, and the minister is fond of saying it's only 1% or 2%. The fact is, the \$400 million worth of cuts represents 8% already of general legislative grants or provincial funding, and there's more to come. One day the minister attacks trustees and blames them for all their problems; the next day he appoints Leon Paroian and the whole exercise is a major attack on teachers. The system is completely destabilized and is having a dramatic negative impact on the quality of education of our students.

Health and education make up very important aspects of this province for the way we live, work and the way that people invest. This government is destroying the province.

NIAGARA COLLEGE

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I recently had the pleasure of announcing on behalf of the Minister of Education and Training, the Honourable John Snobelen, that the new Niagara College Glendale campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake would go ahead. It's a tremendous undertaking. My government is providing \$27 million towards this project in addition to the \$5 million the college has already received.

This investment, like other post-secondary investments already announced, proves that this government cares about students, this government cares about post-secondary education opportunities and lifelong learning, and this government cares about economic development and jobs.

The entire Niagara region will benefit from this announcement. Immediate jobs will be created as well as spinoff investments for every single Niagara municipality.

There is no doubt about it, the approval of the Niagara College capital project proves that this government is spending wisely, with major human and job dividends as a result. There will be jobs in roadbuilding, construction, the trades, the purchase of equipment and furniture, and students and potential students visiting or relocating to our area will require transportation and housing.

The decision to approve the Niagara College capital building project proves that this government cares about the people of this province, its taxpayers, its businesses and its students.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm pleased to stand today. Yesterday in the House, I was able to ask the Minister of Health a question regarding the women in my community requiring obstetrical services who are looking for obstetricians.

I might tell the minister if he doesn't know, although we've told him several times, I currently have 75 women in my community who do not have an obstetrician who are pregnant. Many of these women also have landed immigrant status. The problem with that is that while the minister attempts to tell women in my community that they can just "pop across the river" to deliver a baby, it is completely unreasonable.

We have to find a way to get the Minister of Health to understand how critical it is. Those of us in this House who have gone through this procedure before, or whose spouses may have, recognize the urgency of delivering a healthy baby. You have significant issues related to prenatal care and significant issues related to delivering a baby. We need to stress to the minister that it is paramount that he resolve this issue. Telling the people in my community maybe one day we'll have a clinic is not enough.

He suggested yesterday that I wasn't being positive. Let me share with the Minister of Health when this member for Windsor-Sandwich will be positive: when we positively see a clinic set up in Windsor, when we positively see obstetricians move to our community to accept the workload, when we positively see that women in my community —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I was at the announcement in Niagara-on-the-Lake where the member for St Catharines-Brock confirmed what had been announced by the last government: its commitment to building a new college for the Niagara campus on that location in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It's remarkable that the people in the Tory caucus think they can hoodwink the public anywhere in Ontario — least of all in Niagara region. Their Ponzi game isn't going to fool anyone. The reality is that at first people in Welland-Thorold were just fearful of what was being done to health care, education, day care and child care as a result of this government's commitment to a tax break for the wealthiest people in this province.

They've moved beyond merely being fearful to angry and mad. People in Niagara region are not going to tolerate the attack on public institutions this government has waged since its election in June 1995. No amount of spin doctoring, doctored-up polls and surveys, advertising and glad-handing is going to overcome the bad taste that's been left by this government and its backbenchers as they engage in this systematic attack on our public education, public health care and jobs.

People in Niagara know that unemployment in Ontario is higher now than it was a year and change ago when these Tories were elected. They don't buy it any more and they're going to make their views known come next election.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise in the House today to show my appreciation to the people of Perth, and the town of St Marys in particular, for the mature way in which they're addressing the proposed restructuring of the health care system in rural Ontario.

Last Wednesday I attended a meeting in the town of St Marys to address some of the questions surrounding the restructuring process. Although emotions surrounding hospitals often run high, the meeting was well run and the information that came out of the meeting was definitely useful to all.

I was encouraged by the turnout and the desire of all within the area to take part in the process of maintaining a viable health care system.

The Huron-Perth District Health Council is presently reviewing the provision of health care in the area and is expected to determine where the priorities are for Perth. The people of St Marys have made it clear that they want to be part of this process. I commend them for their initiative and support them in their effort.

We, as government, have made a commitment to the provision of health care services and the wellbeing of the people in this province. I am proud to say that the people in the riding of Perth are working together to ensure that this goal is achieved and health care is affordable and available to all who need it.

STATUS OF BILL Pr35

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a favourable report from the commissioners of estate bills with respect to Bill Pr35, An Act respecting the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

Accordingly, pursuant to standing order 86(e), the bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COURT SYSTEM

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I rise today to inform members of another major initiative launched in conjunc-

tion with Crime Prevention Week and Domestic Assault Prevention Month.

This government believes that all Ontarians have the right to feel secure in their own homes, neighbourhoods and communities. We are committed to community safety, strengthening victims' rights and building a swifter, more effective justice system.

I am pleased to announce that we are keeping these commitments. Beginning immediately we will launch a major attack on the backlog in the criminal justice system in the six most heavily burdened provincial court locations: Newmarket, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Brampton and Barrie.

The backlog in our criminal courts is a long-standing problem that must be continually addressed. If we don't take action now to reduce the backlog, serious cases could possibly be thrown out of court because of undue delays. Criminal cases should not be thrown out because of undue delay. That is unacceptable to this government. The government is taking proactive steps to ensure that cases are dealt with properly. Some 40 ministry staff, including staff from our head office, are being assigned to special blitz teams to assist local prosecutors in speeding up criminal cases and to clear up the backlogs in our criminal courts.

1350

The blitz will see prosecutors and court officials working together with victims, judges and police in order to open more courtrooms where serious, violent cases will be treated as a priority. This initiative will make the courts in these problem areas more efficient and move cases through the system more quickly. We will make maximum use of existing staff courtrooms and resources. We will work cooperatively with the judiciary to find alternative sites, in town halls or portables if necessary, for these cases. This six-month blitz will begin first in Scarborough and will be fully operational in other jurisdictions within weeks.

This is just the first step in addressing the systemic problems of long-standing court backlogs. Over the coming months, we will be working to identify viable long-term solutions to make the criminal justice system more efficient and help prevent a buildup of cases in the future.

This blitz is a cooperative effort. Crown attorneys are working in cooperation with our partners in the justice system: victims, judges, the defence bar and the police. This morning at Scarborough's criminal courts, I was joined by Chief Judge Linden, Judge Patrick Shepherd of Scarborough, Crown Attorney John McMahon and Chief of Police David Boothby, chief of the Metropolitan Toronto Police, to launch the blitz at the criminal courts. The special teams work with local prosecutors and court officials to assist them in moving cases through the system more quickly.

By clearing the criminal justice system of these backlogs, we will make sure that our community stays safe, victims' rights are strengthened and that we continue to enjoy swifter, more effective justice. Safe communities enhance our quality of life, which is key to promoting jobs, investment and economic growth.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Gee, you guys are absolutely amazing over there. My colleagues were just

saying that you would think the Attorney General has swooped in like a caped crusader coming in here to fix a big problem. Why is there a big problem? Because you created it, just like your Minister of Education created a crisis. It's the way all your ministries work: Create a crisis and then come in like the big hero, "We're going to clean it up."

Why is there such a backlog in the courts, Minister? I'll tell you why. Because despite the promises that you're going to be cutting down on hard-core crime, your government announced over \$19 million in cuts to the criminal justice system this year. These cuts included a \$600,000 funding reduction in major criminal law prosecutions and the planned elimination of one third of the crown attorneys. In January 1996, the three senior justices in Ontario took the very unprecedented step of writing to you about the major problem in Ontario courts. Last April, your government announced \$120 million in justice cuts, of which \$60 million and 600 jobs came out of the Ministry of Attorney General office. So you're creating the problem.

Since early this year, Ontario crown attorneys have been warning that thousands of criminal cases would be jeopardized if the government went ahead with its planned elimination of one third of the province's crown attorneys. Although the Attorney General eventually backed off on his plan to fire those 160 crown attorneys, we do know that we've lost 20 through attrition and you're not replacing those women who go on maternity leave, so you're starting to reduce the number of crown attorneys in the province.

Just a few weeks ago, in a leaked confidential memo from Madam Justice Susan Lang, she described also the chaos in the courts in Ontario, including incidents of lost files, long delays and missing evidence, all due to the budget cutbacks. We know that delays threaten 50% of criminal cases in Metro, but 542 cases have been in the system for more than eight months and risk being thrown out because of long delays. This crisis is a direct result of your budget cutbacks of this year. You created the crisis, Minister.

Despite your promises on taking a hard line on crime, it is clear that with the Harris government, the cuts come first. That means that something else has to give. In this case it looks to be our criminal justice system. Of course, it's important for victims to see that justice is done swiftly and surely, and nothing could be more detrimental to the legitimacy of our criminal justice system as a whole and nothing is more likely to throw it into disrepute than the prospect of hundreds of cases being dismissed out of hand by our courts.

But the Attorney General is not the hero here. You're not the hero here. You have not swept in on the white horse with your special blitz team to solve this problem and snatch a victory from the jaws of defeat, as you would have us believe. The truth is that this government's shortsighted thinking has gotten us into this mess in the very first place and many of these cases would not have been jeopardized if the government had not made the indiscriminate cuts to the criminal justice system. There are simply not enough people and not enough resources in the system to process those expeditiously and

in a timely fashion. This is why we have a backlog of criminal cases in Ontario. So, Attorney General, why don't you put the money back?

We are glad these cases now are not going to be lost, because it would be a tragedy for the victims of crime all over this province. But we don't think the government should be congratulated for coming up with the idea of this major criminal court backlog blitz. Instead, you should be criticized for making those cuts in the first place that caused this crisis. Ultimately, it will be the victims of crime who will pay the price for this crisis in the courts.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased the Attorney General has finally responded to the real concerns that have been expressed again and again about the growing backlogs in the courts and has done something at least in these particular courts that he's mentioned — Newmarket, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Brampton and Barrie — where I understand the backlog lists are probably well beyond the danger level. It is good to finally see some action being taken to deal with those.

I guess having a special blitz sounds very impressive to people. One of the real issues that is involved is whether or not it delivers justice services appropriately.

One of the problems with blitzes is that defendants have defence counsel who are usually, if you talk to defence counsel, booked many months in advance. Having a blitz that begins virtually immediately and then is going to spread to these other areas will cause real difficulty for defence attorneys who are defending defendants who are caught up in that kind of situation. I'm afraid, having had experience while we were in government with trying to clean up a mess that was left in the courts, that it is certainly easier said than done and the actual results will be something that people will be looking at.

The other issue of course is that of making sure that all of the court documents are present, that all of the evidentiary matters are present, that disclosure has happened properly, that all of those matters have been taken care of in a way that does not jeopardize the successful prosecution of those cases. I can tell the Attorney General from experience that when you take as many people out of the court system as this Attorney General has had to to meet the cost reductions that are there, very often that nitty-gritty support work to keep the courts going is what creates the havoc in the courts. All of us have read the newspaper accounts of files not being available, of witnesses not having been served, of the problem around defence attorneys having been scheduled in other courtrooms and having a conflict when this kind of thing goes along.

So I would say to the Attorney General that I think it's a good thing that he has begun, but he is going to have to monitor very closely whether the additional costs — and of course there will be additional costs. Let's not kid ourselves. We're talking about 40 additional staff from the Ministry of the Attorney General alone. When you add the overtime for police officers, police officers who I would say are probably scheduled long in advance — I've done as a job-shadow exercise the scheduling in

courts and know that it works with the duty time of the police officers on the cases. One of the issues when you do a blitz is that you suddenly put into the picture another whole set of court dates that may conflict with off-duty time of officers who are essential to the success of the case. That is a real concern and something the Attorney General will have to keep his eye on.

I'm pleased that the Attorney General is finding Chief Judge Sidney Linden as cooperative as I always did in trying to deal in a timely way with scheduling issues in the courts. But it must be a real stretch for the Chief Judge to take that cooperative position given the number of vacancies that currently occur at the provincial level. There have been many vacancies on the bench at the provincial level that have not been filled despite the fact that the appointments advisory committee has put forward appointments advice to the Attorney General. It obviously hasn't been to his pleasure and he has not made the appointments of the judges that are needed in order to continue this kind of situation. There are real concerns around the actual strength on the bench to deal with day-to-day matters, never mind to assign people additionally to this kind of blitz. That's a very important issue for the minister to keep in mind if he expects this to be successful.

The last issue, of course, as I read the Canada News-Wire report from the announcement this morning, was that the minister does have assurance from the federal Chief Justice that the General Division court will cooperate in Brampton and Newmarket. A lot of these cases are going through in other jurisdictions. If these are preliminary hearings that are happening and they get moved on to General Division, it is going to be necessary for the federally appointed judicial system to exercise a great deal of generosity with the province of Ontario to ensure that these cases actually move through the whole system.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Premier, who is ultimately responsible for all major decisions the government makes. There is a growing concern in this province about your determination to place video lottery terminals — that is, slot machines of electronic nature — in every restaurant and every bar in every neighbourhood in Ontario.

When you were in opposition and even during the election campaign, you and Ernie Eves, your Treasurer, made compelling and angry speeches about the expansion of government-run gambling ventures and activities. I admired and agreed with and applauded those speeches, and so did many residents of this province.

Premier, in the face of all the evidence from police and other experts in the field of gambling addiction, why are you continuing to force this major escalation of gambling on the province of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm happy to have the question and respond. There may be other details for

which, in subsequent questions, the Solicitor General will have information on enforcement, or the House leader. Let me say generally that while I accept accountability and responsibility for the actions of the government, you would know that I don't make all the decisions.

Mr Bradley: Yes, you do.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: Clearly, that's why we have a cabinet, why we have a caucus —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Harris: That's why we have a cabinet and why we have a caucus and why we have a bureaucracy and why we have a Legislature and why we have partners in municipalities, school boards and, of course, hospital boards and colleges and universities, but I accept the premise that as leader of this government and as Premier of Ontario I will answer and accept responsibility. The member indicated that we are embarking on placing video lottery terminals in bars and restaurants, and that's not the case.

Mr Bradley: I detect a shift in the Premier's position, but I want to continue with this line of questioning. This morning at a press conference in this building Rev Karl Burden, the head of Concerns, Canada, which is the oldest not-for-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of addiction in Canada, stated what so many in the police and addiction prevention community have said, and I want to quote him:

"Video lottery terminals are particularly seductive. They've quickly become known as the cocaine of the gambling industry because they provide an immediate rush, similar to the one experienced by cocaine addicts. This form of gambling is particularly addictive for young people because it marries the rush of old-fashioned one-armed bandits with the bells and whistles of the video arcade."

Karl Burden is stating what virtually anybody knowledgeable in the field of gambling addiction is saying, that your government is moving into the dark and murky waters of neighbourhood gambling. Premier, will you do what is right, now, and not what is expedient? Will you withdraw your VLT bill and show true common sense?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, the VLT bill allows the government to proceed as eight other provinces have proceeded. It allows us to regulate and exact strict government control over any VLTs. As you know, the government has announced its intention to proceed with VLTs in permanent charity halls where proper control can be exerted, as cannot be in the three-day rovers right now, and also at racetracks, where there is gambling already.

It is the government's intention to provide more resources to clamp down on what some estimate to be in excess of the number of VLTs that we're talking about, operating illegally with no controls. It is our intention to do all the things we think will provide for fewer machines and better control of the whole industry, as eight other provinces have done in the country.

Mr Bradley: I hear a retreat in the Premier's answer and I want to commend him for that retreat, because

clearly he's now understanding what neighbourhood gambling is all about. I know that you have a tax cut and as a result you have to make up revenue. It's extremely attractive to have hundreds of millions of dollars potentially coming into government coffers. But, Premier, you will be exacting a tremendous and awful price on the social fabric of this province in proceeding with video lottery terminals in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in this province.

Are you really prepared to pay the awful social price of placing these electronic slot machines where the addicted and the young can get at them easily or are you now prepared to withdraw your bill and amend it and not allow these electronic slot machines in every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: There's no need to amend the bill. There is absolutely nothing in the bill that would allow them to be easily accessible to young people. Second, as long as our party is in power you can rest assured that this government has no intention of proceeding to make them available, for young people, in every bar, neighbourhood and community.

In trying to bring better control, better policing, bringing resources to bear, as opposed to the illegal terminals, which are now estimated to be in excess of what we're talking about, not everybody agrees with the information being propagated by the Liberal Party, NDP — one and the same. In fact, according to the Addiction Research Foundation there is currently no credible research available to support the suggestion that video lottery terminals are any more addictive than other forms of gambling. Because one or two people say it and you repeat it, that does not make it so.

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is also to the Premier. Premier, you said there's a difference of opinion. Let me tell you something. This weekend Insight Canada Research, on behalf of Concerns, Canada, one of the oldest anti-addiction non-profit organizations in the province, and the Ontario Liberal caucus asked Ontarians what they thought of your plans to bring video slot machines to bars and restaurants in Ontario.

The results are clear: 62% of Ontarians oppose your plans to bring video slot machines to every bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood, and a majority of Ontarians believe it will not prevent crime; only 2% of Ontarians have bought your line on this issue.

Premier, will you listen to the very real concerns of ordinary Ontarians? Will you scrap your plans to bring video slot machines to every bar, restaurant and neighbourhood in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member will know that other than in the casino in Windsor and the casino at Rama and the proposed casino at Niagara Falls, there will be no video slot machines in Ontario.

1410

Mr Crozier: That's certainly a retreat, and I want that on record. You didn't have a mandate to do it and I'm glad you've said that. You haven't fooled anybody, Premier, until today when you said that. Sixty-two per cent of Ontarians, I repeat, think your plan to bring video

slot machines to every neighbourhood and bar and restaurant in Ontario is wrong, dead wrong. People know this has nothing to do with fighting crime because a majority of Ontarians don't believe it will eliminate the illegal machines. You're so desperate for cash for your tax cut for the rich that you've had to go this route. Premier, will you tell us again that you will not put any video slot machines in any bar or restaurant in any neighbourhood in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: What we've indicated is this — if that's the question that you asked the voters, then let me be very clear. The slot machines will be in the licensed casinos that have been brought forward — Windsor, in Rama and then also in Niagara Falls. Secondly, the video lottery terminals, which are quite different, this bill will allow those to go into assorted places within the province of Ontario. They're outlined in the bill, of course.

What we have also indicated is that it is our intention to begin with no video slot machines anywhere, of course — those'll only be in the casinos — but with video lottery terminals of the kind that are now over 20,000 operating illegally. They will be introduced into the controlled environments of the permanent homes that will replace the three-day roving casinos, and into racetracks. That will be evaluated. We'll report back to people and analyse that before there would be any expansion into any other location.

Mr Crozier: This gets interesting. Let me tell you this: 51% of Ontarians believe your plans to bring video slot machines to every bar and every community of this province will lead to more crime, but they're not alone, unlike what you said earlier. Chief Fantino, head of the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, says this will lead to more crime. Paul Gottschalk, the acting staff inspector, special investigation services, the Metro police, says this will lead to more crime. Even OPP officers who work for the Solicitor General say your plans to bring video slot machines to Ontario will lead to more crime.

Premier, can you tell me today that you're ignoring the concerns of ordinary Ontarians who believe that your video slot machines will cause more crime and are you ignoring the law officials of this province who say it will in fact bring more crime?

Hon Mr Harris: I realize you've wasted all this money asking people about video slot machines that are in the full-blown casinos, but what we are dealing with is video lottery terminals, and yes, there are some people who have opinions that they do not believe that in fact it will deal with organized crime. However, I might pass on to you that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police believe that legalized gaming can serve to curtail illegal gaming and corresponding criminal activities. That's chaired by Tom O'Grady, OPP commissioner, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. On the other end of the spectrum, we have the union. This is Paul Walter, president of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association. He says legalizing VLTs will have a severe financial impact on these criminal organizations. So both —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question, third party.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health and it concerns some comments he made in the House yesterday. He said yesterday that he was very sensitive to the needs of remote northern hospitals with respect to their special circumstances and their need for unique funding formulas. That's what you said.

I want to ask you about Atikokan General Hospital. It has a \$3-million operating budget. You've cut them \$80,000 this year. In an effort to maintain services, they're already being forced into a deficit situation, so that next year they could face a shortfall of \$280,000.

They put forward a plan showing how they would retain the services for the community, and your ministry rejected it. It showed no sensitivity to them whatsoever. Basically, what you said to them is, "Despite the fact that you're two hours away from any other health care centre, cut your rehabilitation services." That's what your ministry said.

By telling small hospitals like this that have no alternative for the community that they should cut, no matter what, is that showing sensitivity to them and their patients?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'd be very pleased to check into the facts of this particular situation, but I would say that my comments of yesterday certainly stand in terms of the special consideration that was given to rural, remote and northern hospitals, in terms of the joint policy and planning committee's funding formula that was developed for last year, and I expect the same consideration will be given to those same hospitals by the JPPC as they develop a new formula for the next fiscal year.

Mr Hampton: I can give you some of the facts. This is a hospital that has only three people working in administration. It has no more than 50 nurses, most of whom are working on a part-time basis. This is a hospital that is faced with cutting its rehabilitation services because of the cutbacks you've imposed on them.

I just want to turn to Windsor. Last week the Windsor Regional Hospital announced the elimination of 90 positions. Staff from across the organization will be affected, including some 30 to 40 nursing positions. Why? It's because of the cuts to the operating budget that you've imposed, and your response to the media was that Windsor Regional Hospital is not allowed to do this without your permission.

You told them that they weren't allowed to make these cuts without your permission, but we talked to them and they said they've got your permission; in fact they've got your direction to make these cuts. This is happening despite the fact that this regional hospital has already gone through restructuring. They've already worked with their numbers.

Minister, are you going to reinstate their funding? They're going to lose basic services as a result of your cuts.

Hon Mr Wilson: At the time the reporter asked me about Windsor — I don't walk around carrying all 219 operating plans in my head. I will echo some of the

comments made during the leader's question, though. The only one who cut health care in Windsor in terms of beds was the NDP government. You cut hundreds of beds out of the system in that part of the province, and we're now responding with getting rid of the waste, administration and duplication that you forgot to do.

The plan put forward by Windsor is their local plan. Yes, the ministry approved the operating plan and I want to publicly thank the health care leaders in Windsor, the union leaders, who, before we approved their operating plan, showed a 50% reduction in administration. It's one area of the province that's consistently ahead of many other areas of the province. They've cut their administration and now they're restructuring the delivery of their services. There's no evidence in their operating plan or anything I've heard from the health care leaders in the Windsor area that direct patient services will be affected in a negative way. If that's your contention now, I want to hear the facts.

Mr Hampton: This is all about the minister's contention that there have been no cuts to health care in this province. The fact of the matter is, you can take remote hospitals in northern Ontario or you can take hospitals in urban Windsor, and cuts are being made in all of those communities and people are being affected. This is about the fact that you can't have it both ways. You've taken \$365 million out of hospitals this year. Then you turn around and you tell people that services won't be threatened. Then you turn around and tell hospitals that are trying to protect the service that they can't run a deficit.

1420

Yesterday you said you were being sensitive to northern Ontario hospitals that have a remote situation. I give you the example of Atikokan, where you're not being sensitive at all. You're telling them to cut their rehabilitation services. That's what this is about. Do you realize that despite all your efforts to spin it, you can't have it both ways?

The fact of the matter is that community after community is losing health care services and you have no plan — no plan with respect to the doctors, no plan with respect to the nurses, no plan with respect to the Ontario Hospital Association that's going to bring it all back together. What are you going to do?

Hon Mr Wilson: Specifically in Atikokan, you should know that ministry staff met on September 17 with the representatives of that hospital and made some suggestions in terms of efficiencies. No decisions have been made and we're waiting to hear back with respect to suggestions that were made by staff to the health care people at the Atikokan hospital.

Secondly, I don't know, my version of history must be entirely different from the honourable member's. I spent 16 months having the privilege as Minister of Health of making announcements in terms of improved health care in community after community, whether it be the community investment fund, the new dialysis clinics, the new heart surgeries, the opening of paediatric oncology units, cardiac stents, some 45 announcements in communities, many of them in opposition members' ridings, where I notice that during the week of the announcement, in their

local papers they give the minister and the ministry and the government credit for having filled service gaps.

We're doing that across the province in an unprecedented way, including making sure we have doctors with emergency rooms. I was confronted with 67 emergency rooms that were closed or closing as we came into office, but 70 emergency rooms in rural and northern Ontario are now open because of the reinvestments this government has made.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Education and Training. The Minister of Education tried something cute here yesterday. He had his researchers take the time to figure out how many days had been lost to collective bargaining disputes with teachers. What he forgot to mention was that the days that have been lost over the last 20 years amount to less than 0.2% of all the instructional student days over the last 20 years — less than 0.2%.

We made some phone calls yesterday. One of the people we talked to was Tracy Martin, who lives in Kitchener and has a six-year-old who attends grade 2 in Kitchener. Ms Martin was asking about her daughter's school day, and she was told, "Oh, we don't go to the library on Mondays any more because of cutbacks." Minister, when a six-year-old child realizes that your cutbacks are affecting her education and curtailing her education —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister of Education.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I actually find it somewhat shocking that the leader of the third party would see a report or read a report that indicates quite clearly that more than 17 million school days have been lost over the last 20 years because of collective bargaining and find that not disturbing. I find it disturbing, my colleagues find it disturbing and I'm sure parents across the province find it disturbing.

Mr Hampton: Once again the minister is so disturbed that he can't answer the question. What I asked him was, does he realize that in fact his cutbacks are taking back many more student days? Since he was so disturbed he couldn't answer the question, let me try again.

Michael J. Laverty, who is the principal of St Joseph's Catholic high school in Renfrew, sent an open letter to the Premier on October 24 in which he stated: "Although our student population increased, we lost the equivalent of one teacher. This effectively closed our library resource centre (which is shameful), and caused the loss of several subjects from the curriculum. Don't tell me that cuts don't hurt kids."

Minister, you took the time to have Mr Paroian figure out that 0.2% of instructional days were lost to collective agreement disputes. Have you taken the time to figure out how many hundreds of thousands of instructional days are going to be lost in libraries and resource centres across this province this year because of your cutbacks?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe I've said in this chamber on several occasions, and I'm pleased to say again today,

that this government will not accept a lower quality of education in any school in the province of Ontario. We asked school boards across the province to find 1.8% of their operating costs in reductions last year. The commission that was appointed by the previous government, by the leader of the third party's government, suggested that 47% of our spending occurs outside of the classroom, so we find a 1.8% reduction to be rather modest in that regard.

I can tell you that it is the member opposite's government that left this province with a system where we spend too much on administration, too little inside the classroom, where the right choices are not made and where in fact there are second-class students. This government will not tolerate that. We are right now involved in a fundamental review of the way education is funded and the way it's governed so we can make better choices in the future.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, according to this minister's formula, the formula that he accepts so warmly, do you know that libraries and student resource centres are not counted as classroom funding? Do you know that when children learn to read in a library, this minister doesn't count that as classroom funding? That's why people around this province laugh at you and find you so ludicrous.

But let's deal with special education, because special education is the other area that's getting cut. Are you going to recognize that literally hundreds of thousands of student curriculum days are being lost in special education because of your cutbacks? You took the trouble to have Leon Paroian figure out that 0.2% over the last 20 years have been lost to collective bargaining. Have you taken the time to figure out how many hundreds of thousands of days of special education have been lost because of your cutbacks?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I don't know how to make this any clearer. The leader of the third party's government failed to address fundamental issues inside of education. Your government was willing, sir, to have second-class students, in terms of funding, across this province; this government is not. Your government was willing to have a funding mechanism that put special needs kids at risk in our system; this government is not.

That is why we are right now engaged in the most comprehensive review of our education system ever conducted in this province. I'm proud of that. We will come to some decisions over the next few months which will ensure that there is sufficient funding to ensure a quality education for every student in this province. That's the commitment of this government.

TRANSPORTATION OF WASTE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I have a question of the Premier. In July of last year, shortly after you were elected Premier, Gordon McGuinty, a close friend of yours and a proponent of the Adams mine garbage proposal, stated, "I have never broached this project with Mr Harris even during all the time he was in opposition." Premier, is that true?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Certainly many people in northern Ontario have brought the subject up with me; to be honest with you, probably in the neighbourhood of hundreds — from the ONTC, supportive, the majority I believe of those involved in your riding, the majority involved in my riding, resolutions from mayors and reeves.

I don't ever recall being lobbied directly by Gordon McGuinty, but certainly Gord McGuinty has on many occasions, through his company or through others, sent information to me, particularly during that time in opposition, urging support and encouragement for the rail-haul proposal, which I am publicly on the record in support of.

Mr Ramsay: I have a sworn affidavit from a New Liskeard lawyer stating that in June 1991, you, Mr McGuinty, Metro councillor Joan King, Kirkland Lake mayor Joe Mavrinac, and then-Commissioner of Public Works Bob Ferguson met at a Toronto restaurant to discuss the Adams mine project.

The affidavit states that not only did you discuss the project, but that it took the form of a strategy meeting and you were prepared to lend your support to the project if and when you were in a position to do so.

1430

Your friend has the potential to make millions of dollars on this deal, and now you have a law containing a last-minute amendment that could make this happen. Finally, you are in a position to make this happen.

How do you explain that both you and Mr McGuinty deny formally talking about this? What are you hiding?

Hon Mr Harris: I have never denied talking about this. I indicated very clearly to you that I have talked to hundreds of people, and I would assume including Mr McGuinty, on the merits of the project. I felt I was in a position as the member for Nipissing to do something about it and so I lent my wholehearted and enthusiastic support to this proposal. I still have lent my support as the member for Nipissing to this proposal.

But you will recall this: While the NDP brought in legislation saying, "We'll tell you where garbage will go," I moved in the opposite direction, scrapped that legislation and said it is now up to Metro, it is now up to other municipalities to determine where garbage will go.

Neither I nor my office nor my government will influence that, but what we will do is, we will bring in legislation to guarantee to the people of this province that we will protect in perpetuity the environment of this province, and, wherever it goes, it will have to pass those independent tests of the scientists and the experts, not the politicians.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. This is Waste Reduction Week in Ontario, so when are you going to bring in sewer use regulations and product steward regulations to prevent toxic waste from entering our sewers and our landfills?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I'm glad the member raised that this is

Waste Reduction Week. I was there yesterday with my parliamentary assistant with the Recycling Council of Ontario kicking off this week on their behalf and was pleased to participate in that event.

We are working with a number of industries to deal with the bars by various sectors in this province to deal with household waste. I promised the Recycling Council yesterday that I would work with them closely to develop programs where we could better attack this problem, which has remained unsolved until this time.

Ms Churley: Minister, you have already cut grants to municipalities for household hazardous waste programs. That's already done. You're axing all the hazardous waste programs in your ministry. That's through Bill 57. You have no plan and you have no strategy. I know that even the auditor has expressed concern in his document that you need to have better monitoring and tracking of toxic waste. You have no pollution prevention plan whatsoever.

I ask you again today —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Is he cutting?

Ms Churley: Yes, more cuts to come. Are you going to announce next week, in the very near future, your waste reduction plan for hazardous waste going into our sewers and our landfills?

Hon Mr Sterling: I think it's odd that we get criticized for economizing in areas where programs haven't worked in the past. The fact of the matter is that no government has been able to address this particular problem in an efficient and economical way and have any decent results.

We are now, for instance, working with the car battery industry to reduce the roadblocks to having cadmium car batteries deposited at various stations across this province so they can be collected and taken back to the manufacturers to be properly disposed of.

The problem we have with household waste is that the old programs didn't work. What we're looking at now is to put into place programs that will work to attack the real problem and to deal with it.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd just like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Italian ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Andrea Negrotto Cambiaso. Welcome.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. In September of this year Ontario Parks ran newspaper advertisements concerning corporate sponsorship opportunities in our provincial parks. I represent a riding that contains the Selkirk, Turkey Point and Long Point provincial parks, all adjacent to Lake Erie, hence my curiosity. Could the minister let us know what he's looking for as far as private sector involvement in our provincial parks?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member

for Norfolk for the question. Ontario Parks is inviting the private sector to participate in programs designed to support the park protection mandate, improve the park environment and enhance the overall quality for park visitors.

As you know, we've already created a dedicated fund for Ontario Parks that enables revenues raised in our parks to stay within the park system as a whole. We're now asking the private sector to work in partnership with us to promote and increase public awareness of the province's outstanding park system through a variety of sponsorship opportunities. Together with the businesses and people of Ontario, we will continue to pursue excellence in our parks program.

Mr Barrett: It's been a month or so since these ads suggesting this sponsorship and partnerships with corporations and business were run. What kind of response have we received to date to this initiative?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm pleased to inform the member in the House that, as of October 29, Ontario Parks has received 105 inquiries about this new opportunity. This is an outstanding show of interest and demonstrates the great attachment the people have to Ontario's park system. Parties interested in corporate partnerships with Ontario Parks can call area code 705-755-PARK.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with your standards of conduct for your Conservative caucus in dealing with the police. The Premier will recall that last September 1995 at Ipperwash Provincial Park there was an occupation of the park by the native community. After three days, and this was perhaps one of the most major confrontations between our OPP and native community, for the first time ever a native was killed.

We now know, Premier, that on at least three occasions the local Conservative member, Mr Beaubien, was at the police command post. We also know he says, and I will quote here from a newspaper clipping, that he was "in constant contact with the Premier's office and the ministries involved. It was my job to keep them apprised." The question is this: Is this an acceptable standard of behaviour for members of your Conservative caucus?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I believe, to the best of my knowledge, everything that has been brought to my attention, including everything you have brought forward today, is.

Second, I would expect, when you consider an event, if it was in any one of your ridings where an illegal occupation had taken place in a provincial park following an occupation of an adjacent federal property, where there was tension, you would want information, you would seek information, you would call upon those to let them know the situation as you saw it from natives and non-natives, a very tense situation.

I think the member acted, to the best of my knowledge, in the best interests of both native and non-native constituents within his riding, a very difficult situation for him, and he sought to get information from any possible

source that he could and he sought to inform everybody he could with his understanding of things he was hearing in his riding. I would expect my members to do that, yes.
1440

Mr Phillips: I understand your standard then: In any confrontation with our police organizations dealing with very sensitive situations with our community, it is, first, acceptable for your Conservative caucus members to be there, to inform the police that they have been in constant contact with your office, the Attorney General and the Solicitor General, that they are keeping you, the Premier, the Attorney General and the Solicitor General informed of everything that's going on there and that they are awaiting instructions from your office. I want you to confirm that you believe that is acceptable behaviour, is an acceptable code of conduct in your Ontario.

Hon Mr Harris: At no time did the police receive any instructions from anybody that I know in my caucus or my office or me or the cabinet.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): My question is to the Attorney General regarding the crisis at the family support plan. I'd like the Attorney General to respond to the following.

On November 1, Ontario Hydro directed the following letter to the director of the family support plan. It reads: "We have been telephoning the employer hotline for over a month now seeking clarification and assistance in processing our remittances to you. To date we have not received any reply to our numerous voice-mail messages.

"In frustration we called the number used by employees and —"

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Find out what's going on over there. Get the facts straight. Talk about it outside the House.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Lambton, come to order, please.

Ms Martel: "We finally got to speak to an agent. We've been trying to confirm where to send the payments via overnight courier as your recent form letter advising of improvements only provided us with a post box address. Your offices have now intermittently started to return our courier payments and it appears some have been lost. When we finally spoke to an agent, we were told to use the address to which the letter is sent.

"Enclosed you will find the cheques which we have received to date as returned. Please send them, because our employees and the payment recipients that your offices have talked to are telling them that we are failing to remit payments to you."

Can you now finally admit that your cuts are causing the crisis at the family support plan?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I don't have any knowledge of the details of the member's question, and if she would provide me with those details I will look into that.

As I've indicated, we are doing a number of things to make this plan better, including the bill that will be debated shortly in this Legislature. I hope the member opposite will take part in that debate and support the bill

and support the move to make this plan effective and to help those who depend on it.

Ms Martel: Let me provide a few more details to the minister so he understands the seriousness of the situation. Hydro weekly remits to the family support plan \$70,000. On an annual basis they remit \$3.5 million. They have been doing this via overnight courier since the inception of the plan. People who used to receive regular support payments, whose ex-spouses are Hydro employees, have gone without for the last four weeks because of this crisis. Now Hydro is receiving letters from the family support plan to say that many of these employees are in arrears and they now have to take even more money out of the paycheques of these employees because of the arrears notice.

When are you finally going to do something with respect to the women and children in this province who are suffering as a direct result of your attempt to finance the tax cuts?

Hon Mr Harnick: Again, I have none of the details. If the member will provide me with those details, as I've indicated to her, I will look into that. I'd be pleased to look into that matter and find the information. As I've said, we are restructuring the plan. We have a bill coming before the Legislature, and I hope the members of the third party will support that bill in an effort to make the family support plan work once and for all.

LANDFILL

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. On Thursday of last week you announced that cabinet had rejected an appeal from Redland Quarries regarding their proposal for a landfill site in the town of Flamborough. Would you explain to the House and the people of Hamilton-Wentworth why cabinet reached that decision?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): The proposed Redlands quarry was turned down by a joint board hearing consisting of members of the Ontario Municipal Board and the Environmental Assessment Board in March 1995. Citizens of that area have been waiting for their answer and we in the cabinet decided that because the proposed landfill was not supported by the host municipality, the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, and because the board had found that there were technical problems associated with the proposal, it was only fair to the citizens of that area to uphold the board, as we should, and reject the application for a landfill site at Redland Quarries.

Mr Pettit: I'd like to point out to the House and the people of Hamilton-Wentworth that this particular matter dragged on for some 10 years and cost untold millions of dollars to all the parties involved. I find that to be clearly unacceptable. My supplementary question for the minister is, how is the new Bill 76 going to improve the environmental assessment process to prevent occurrences such as this particular one happening again?

Hon Mr Sterling: I find the time spent unacceptable not only in terms of the monetary expense, but also, when I was out at the site on Thursday last, I found out from the citizens what anguish and pain many of them

had been through for the past 10 years in dealing with this issue. It was indeed a very emotional issue.

Bill 76 will focus environmental assessment hearings in a much more efficient manner: efficient in terms of bringing the issues to a head, allowing proper public consultation, proper availability for all parties to put forward their side of the story. We believe we can scope a hearing of this nature down to a period of 12 months from a time span, as was exhibited in this area, of 10 years.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Education. You've continued to state in this House over the last few months that your cuts, your massive gutting of the education system in Ontario, are not impacting classroom education, or what you define as classroom education. I want to point out to you today some examples that blatantly contradict what you are saying.

In my community of Hamilton-Wentworth, we have school libraries that have been closed for the first two months of the school year because of staffing shortages and not being able to have librarians in those classrooms; a school, St Joachim's in Ancaster, that has a capacity of 400, has 1,000 students and has become Portable City because, as a result of your cuts, they cannot afford any expansion and the students are cramped in portables in unbearable conditions; school boards that have computers on their desks and can't use them because they don't have the affordability to maintain those computers.

Minister, this morning it was reported that the Halton Board of Education is considering laying off 500 teachers from their workforce next year. Can you explain to the House today how the layoff of 500 teachers in one board across this province is not going to impact classroom education?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the honourable member opposite for the question. It's an opportunity to perhaps inform him of some facts. First of all, I would reject the assumption or the allegation that a 1.8% reduction in operating costs is massive. I think that's hardly massive, and I think the people of the province of Ontario know much better than that. Secondly, you wonder about portables in school yards. I wonder about that too. Under the previous two governments, some 8,000 portables were added to our school system across the province because the previous two governments were unwilling to take on the funding of education to make sure there were no second-class citizens in the province and to make sure there was a capital program that would work for people. We are doing both of those things, and I am proud of that.

Mr Agostino: I think the first thing we should provide to the Minister of Education is a calculator so he can figure out the extent of the cuts. Let me tell you, when you look at the real cuts and real dollars as provincial funding, you're talking about 11%, not 2%.

School boards have done their part. The Hamilton-Wentworth separate school board has cut administration by 50%. The Hamilton board of education has cut administration by 35%. We now have schools in our

community where trustees, as told to me this morning, are concerned for the safety of the students because they cannot afford to maintain those schools in the order and the shape they should be in.

1450

Minister, you are now contemplating more cuts. You're now talking about further cuts to education. I'm sure at the end of November we'll hear that wonderful news again, as you're going to impact and gut education in Ontario. Can you guarantee this House that any further cuts you make will not impact one single student in a classroom of any board across this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Let's make this very clear once again. I want to make sure the honourable member understands this. No decision made by this government has hurt a single student in the province of Ontario, nor will it. This government, unlike the previous two governments, understands that every —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. That was rather remarkable —

Interjections.

The Speaker: I've been doing this all day. We can do it all day. Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: In all fairness, Mr Speaker, you might be able to do it all day but I'm getting tired.

I just want to say that I think it's important for the people of Ontario to understand this, that we have students in Ontario who receive as much as 30% less than other students in the amount allocated for their education. We recognize the essential unfairness of that. We are going to address it. I think it's regrettable that the previous two governments did not. We are taking that problem on.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A number of credible studies have rejected amalgamation of municipalities, saying it's not going to save any money. Anne Golden, whose GTA task force you have praised, says amalgamation won't work. A study of Ontario municipalities published this year by the Canadian Tax Journal says, "Costs are affected by the quantity and quality of services provided, not by government structure." A Price-Waterhouse study of Ottawa-Carleton done in 1992 said, "One-tier government would increase taxes by 5% to 16%." An article by George Boyne in the journal *Public Administration* says, "Based on US experience, a one-tier system may not lead to greater efficiency and the advantages of two-tier systems have been underestimated." Minister, can you name any credible study that you have read that would prove one big government is the way to go?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for his question. Yes, I could name a number of studies that indicate single tiers work. Single tiers work in a number of jurisdictions. I suppose the member would suggest under his scenario that we should take the Metropolitan Toronto Police and

divide them into six communities. Would that make any sense? I don't think so. Perhaps you would like to take the ambulance services and divide them into six communities. Would that make any sense? Obviously there are services that can be provided at one level, at one tier, and I think most of the services that are currently being delivered by six duplicated, overlapping communities could best be delivered by one tier, and there are many studies to show that.

Mr Marchese: Minister, that's why I asked you if you've read some studies and can you name them. All you say is yes, you've seen some. I haven't seen any, but I would like to see them. You argue that there are savings but you make the case for one big government without proving it. What we want to be able to do is to have you quote similar sources, as I'm doing now. Harry Kitchen, professor of economics at Trent University in Peterborough, says, "Not all services get cheaper with amalgamation."

You are charging ahead with no public hearings, no public input and no public debate. There is an obvious need in my mind for public hearings. Will you hold public hearings on this very important issue?

Hon Mr Leach: Again I thank you for the questions. There are studies that have been done, very recent studies, specifically for Metropolitan Toronto. This has probably been the most overstudied issue in the history of Ontario. Since 1969, when I think the first referendum was held, a referendum by all the people in this area that said, yes, amalgamation is the way to go, studies have been done since that time to now, all reaching the same conclusion. The most recent study was done by an independent consultant for Metropolitan Toronto, which proved the same thing.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): My question is to the minister without portfolio who is responsible for Bill 59, the Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act.

Far too many people in my constituency have been very concerned with skyrocketing auto insurance rates. They've seen rates go up under the two previous governments year after year after year. Could the minister please tell this House just how much auto insurance rates will drop for the good drivers of the province of Ontario?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I know the honourable member's quite concerned about this issue because he comes from an area of this province where in fact a consumer group organized in order to complain and try to encourage a government to listen to Ontarians, to try to create a product that was for the consumer of this province, and I know the honourable member will be quite pleased to hear that as a result of the work that we did, as a result of the work of the steering committee, the consultation process, average rates in this province will be going down 4.4% effective November 1 of this year.

Clearly, the honourable members across the floor did not want to see a rate reduction because they did not vote in support of this particular bill. We believed Ontario drivers deserved a break, and they've gotten it with Bill 59.

Mr Baird: Regrettably, in the last two rounds of auto insurance reform, nothing in those rounds led to greater consumer understanding of what has become an increasingly complex system or dealt with the growing problem of fraud in the province of Ontario.

Auto insurance fraud has been one of the major causes of skyrocketing auto insurance rates for people and families in my riding. Could the minister give the House some details on how the new measures contained in Bill 59 to deal with consumer understanding and fraud will help keep rates low?

Hon Mr Sampson: Yes, indeed, fraud was a serious concern. As we went through the auto insurance review, it was quite clear that there was a tremendous amount of fraud that was driving up rates, and we chose to attack that in Bill 59.

One of the largest areas was the high percentage of uninsured drivers in this province. Somewhere between 10% and 20% of the driving population under the previous governments — I guess they thought it was acceptable — were not buying auto insurance, were not contributing to the pool. We dealt with that. We dealt with that by increasing the fines not two times, three times, but 10 times the amount of the previous legislation, because driving without insurance in this province is against the law, and we're going to stop it.

CLOSURE OF CAMPGROUNDS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on an issue I've questioned him on many times. I'm referring to the minister's broken promises to have the parks currently closed in the St Lawrence Parks Commission opened for 1996. Investors have forwarded their proposals directly to the minister and to myself, investors have been lined up trying to operate those parks, investors the minister has let slip through his fingers the past tourism season.

Minister, time and time again since you came into power I have read your quotes back to you. It is very clear you promised the parks would be open in the summer of 1996 and equally clear that you did not deliver on your promise. I would like to ask you today, will you commit to allowing these parks to open next summer? A simple yes or no would suffice, and don't give me your old rigmarole that you gave me before.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to respond to the question. The very simple explanation is that the proposals he is referring to were just not satisfactory, and in this era of financial responsibility on the part of this government it was not the time to accept such proposals. It's as simple as that.

As a matter of fact, I think they were closed when you were in power, and they're not going to be open until we have a proper financial plan.

Mr Cleary: The minister is wrong again.

1500

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Who shut them down, John?

Mr Cleary: No, but you know — anyway, we won't get into that here. As you know, you have stood idly by since you came to power and lost tourism dollars in eastern Ontario, lost jobs in our area, lost economic spinoff. Now that the parks have been allowed to fall into a state of disarray, maybe private investors are not as anxious as they used to be, but I still think they're out there. Six years of neglect have heaped problems on these parks and now that the new government is in place, they have to be an accomplice to this.

On behalf of the people of my riding and the municipal councils, which you did not meet with, I request a detailed report on how you intend to open these parks, or do you simply not care any more?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I heard the honourable member say that I was wrong again. Well, he's wrong again. It was his party that closed the parks. Let me say to the member that I was in the Kingston region two weeks ago, approximately, to take a look at the St Lawrence Parks Commission and I had good chats with the people at Fort Henry and with the members of the commission. I spoke to them and I said that we are in a time of fiscal restraint and when we can get the private sector to work with us, then perhaps those parks will be open again. But we are not going to do it until we have a proper plan.

TRANSPORTATION FOR THE DISABLED

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, if I could get his attention. Thank you very much. I won't get a chance for a supplementary so I'm going to make this very simple.

You remember Pearl Miller, the 79-year-old who has been cut off Wheel-Trans and who came down here to meet you? I'm sure you do; she's kind of hard to forget. Minister, you promised her to set up a meeting with Paul Christie and you were going to go with her to that meeting. ARCH, the advocacy group on behalf of the disabled, has been pushing your office to get that meeting set up. We find out just today that Paul Christie has now decided that he refuses to meet with Mrs Miller. He will, however, meet with you.

Minister, the proposition of two Tories meeting behind closed doors is something we see all too often with this government, and it's not good enough. It's not good enough for Mrs Miller and it's not good enough for the 10,000 other disabled people who are being cut off Wheel-Trans. My simple question: Will you commit to us here today that you will take someone from ARCH, the advocacy group on behalf of the disabled, with you to that meeting so we can have some openness and some accountability and not backroom Tory dealing?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly I can understand Mr Christie's position in not meeting with Mrs Miller. There is an appeal in process, and I do understand the situation. However, my office has been in touch with Mrs Miller and she is in agreement that she does not have to participate in that meeting and she has agreed for the ministry staff to discuss that with myself and Mr Christie. I really have that assurance from Mrs

Miller that she does not want to participate in that particular meeting. I want to say to the honourable member that a meeting has been established and will take place with Mr Christie and myself on November 21.

PETITIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My petition reads:

"We, the undersigned, strongly protest any plans to privatize TVOntario. The privatization of TVOntario would jeopardize the excellent educational and information programming provided by TVOntario. The sale of TVO would also jeopardize Wawatay radio network's native language programming and Wahsa distance education services because both depend on TVO's distribution system."

This is signed by many of my constituents from Port Severn, Hudson, Sioux Lookout and throughout the region. I too attach my name to this petition.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition with about 100 names of residents from 145 St George Street, 151 St George Street and 153 St George Street. This is what the petition says:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to take away the protections of the Rent Control Act;

"Whereas the government is proposing to allow a landlord to charge a tenant who moves into an apartment whatever the landlord can get away with;

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to raise the limit of how high rents can increase for all tenants;

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to make it easier to demolish or convert existing affordable rental housing;

"Whereas the government is proposing to take away the rent freeze which has been successful in forcing some landlords to repair their buildings;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to keep the existing rent laws, which provide true protection for tenants, in place."

I affix my signature to this.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the administration of Families Against Deadbeats, Renate Diorio, Heinz Paul and Danielle McIsaac, are in total support of Bill 82, presented by the Honourable Charles Harnick to the Legislative Assembly on October 2, 1996, outlining the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, to replace the Family Support Plan Act, 1992;

"Whereas the changes will relieve the taxpayers of Ontario and provide proper enforcement required to collect and administer child support payments and orders;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We support and agree with all of the changes outlined in the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, set forth by the Honourable Charles Harnick as Bill 82, and urge the Legislature to pass this bill into law as soon as possible."

I have signed this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): There are too many people standing up. It's confusing for me; I don't know who to call. There's also too much noise.

ACCESS TO RECREATION AREAS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition forwarded to me Mr James Gerow of Thunder Bay and signed by over 250 hunters and fishermen in the Thunder Bay area who are very concerned about the closure of an access road by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The petition reads as follows:

"We are concerned Canadian citizens worried about the controls over crown land by private interest groups. On September 14, 1998, a culvert will be removed from the Garden Lake Road at Otter Toot crossing. This closure will eliminate access to a great number of lakes and 100 kilometres of road for hunting and fishing. We are worried that the private citizen no longer has input or control of our outdoors and recreation areas. On behalf of the people using this area for hunting and fishing, we hope the use of this road and area will continue not only for the personal use of privately owned businesses but for all taxpaying Canadians."

I sign my name to that petition.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition here signed by residents of the Waterloo-Kitchener area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we as parents believe that school councils should play an important role in education, with clearly defined responsibilities limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we as ratepayers are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of schools to deal with board policies as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

I am signing the petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I have a petition on behalf of many of the residents of Hastings-Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we believe that provincial interest in public libraries in Ontario is fundamental to the rights of all Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain the provincial interest in public libraries by ensuring the continuance of the following:

(1) grants to ensure that all Ontarians have equalized access to library materials and services;

(2) coordination of resource-sharing programs such as interlibrary loan and Internet access;

(3) policy to ensure the future of the network of Ontario public libraries;

(4) provincial assistance directly to libraries at the service level, for example, through Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service-North;

(5) legislation that maintains the autonomy of public library boards."

I affix my signature.

1510

APPAREILS DE LOTERIE VIDÉO

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai une pétition de l'abbé Jacques Poirier de la paroisse Sainte-Euphémie de Casselman :

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que le projet de loi 75 aura un effet négatif sur les organismes de charité ;

«Attendu que le projet de loi 75 provoquera une augmentation des cas de dépendance au jeu et causera des dommages irréparables à des familles de toutes les régions de la province ;

«Attendu que le gouvernement n'a pas spécifié quelles organisations de charité bénéficieront des revenus des loteries vidéo,

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons à tous les partis représentés à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de s'opposer au projet de loi 75.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have a petition here from literally hundreds of my constituents and constituents of the member for Algoma regarding day care and child care. It's to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas child care is an essential service and children should not be used to make money; and

"Whereas reducing current standards to minimal building codes compromises the safety of children; and

"Whereas providing funding to the private sector will lead to reduced accountability for tax dollars; and

"Whereas children's growth and development could be in serious jeopardy without trained professionals caring for them; and

"Whereas reducing monitoring inspections and increasing staff-child ratios will result in poor-quality child care programs; and

"Whereas staff wages are a major indicator of quality, proposed reductions and wage subsidies will have a negative impact on child care; and

"Whereas the need for parental choice in child care is recognized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to reconsider the directions proposed in Improving Ontario's Child Care System, the report released by Janet Ecker, as we feel it will have a negative impact on the families of Ontario."

I sign my name to this petition.

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have petitions here from greater Grand Bend:

"We, the undersigned, support the following:

"(1) That the community commonly referred to as Grand Bend, which includes the areas of Bosanquet north of the Greenway Road, and the Pinery Provincial Park, as well as the areas of Stephen township, which are adjacent to the existing village of Grand Bend, be brought together as one single community, retaining the name Grand Bend;

"(2) When a newly amalgamated municipality is created, that this unified greater Grand Bend area not be divided by municipal boundaries;

"(3) That the amalgamated municipality that includes the greater Grand Bend community provide the best economic alternatives for supply of services and utilities and fair representation for our area; and

"(4) That the individual residential areas and subdivisions situated within greater Grand Bend retain their identity and characteristics and continue to operate with their community associations."

I have a number of petitions here with approximately 100 signatures on them.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closure of two acute care hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas the overall number of available beds will be reduced by approximately 35%; and

"Whereas the reduction in beds will affect Sudbury's ability to remain the referral centre for health care in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas there will be a large number of layoffs in the health profession, impacting the quality of local health care and our Sudbury economy; and

"Whereas the global annual budget for Sudbury health care will be reduced by 25%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to close two acute care Sudbury hospitals."

There are 1,000 names in this petition to add to the 12,304 we already have.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from the OFL joint health and safety conference entitled "It's Your Life, Don't Leave Work

Without It," where over 1,000 delegates considered the WCB intention of this government and denounced it thoroughly.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is attacking workers' compensation benefits and the rights of injured workers; and

"Whereas Tory plans include taking \$15 billion from injured workers and giving \$6 billion to employers, including the government's rich corporate friends; and

"Whereas Cam Jackson, the former Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for gutting the WCB, refused to hold public hearings, choosing to meet secretly with business and insurance industry representatives; and

"Whereas the WCB has about \$7.6 billion in assets and its unfunded liability has been steadily shrinking; and

"Whereas the Jackson report and WCB legislation are just part of a coordinated attack on occupational health and safety protections for working families in Ontario; and

"Whereas Tory plans also include abolition of the internationally respected Occupational Disease Panel; and

"Whereas the government needs to hear the message that taking money from injured workers and lowering incentives for employers to make workplaces safer is not the way to make Ontario a better place to live;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold full, province-wide public hearings on WCB reform; to listen to the voice of the people calling for improved occupational health and safety protection; and to tell the Tory government to call off its attack on the dignity and standard of living of injured workers and their families."

I add my name in support of theirs.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearms smuggling and trafficking, and a ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the streets and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of

Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I have placed my signature to this petition.

NURSING STAFF

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is decreasing the role of registered nurses in Ontario; and

"Whereas decreasing the use of registered nurses is not a cost-effective measure. This data is well determined through comprehensive research in the United States, England and Canada; and

"Whereas a decline or elimination of registered nurses has demonstrated the following undesirable outcomes: a substantial increase in mortality-morbidity rates; an increase in length of hospitalization stays; an increase in the number of complications; an increase in readmission rates to hospitals from long-term care facilities and the community; an increase in the number of patient/resident/family complaints/dissatisfactions; an increase in overall health care costs; and

"Whereas registered nurses, with their in-depth knowledge and assessment skills, actively demonstrate leadership and professional expertise that result in positive clinical outcomes in the hospital setting, long-term care facilities as well as the community; and

"Whereas registered nurses are one of the very few health care and regulated professionals who have in-depth assessment skills that evaluate the status of the whole person 24 hours a day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Ministry of Health stop the chaos they are creating in health care and recognize and support the important role of the registered nurse in health delivery in Ontario."

I add my name to this important petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I have a petition from the parents of Hilltop Middle School on education cutbacks.

"The Ontario provincial government, under Premier Mike Harris and Education Minister John Snobelen, is threatening the future of our children's education and lives with huge cuts in the education budget."

Interjections.

Mr Ford: This is a perceived letter, that these people think this is going to happen.

"This action could result in any or all of the following: larger classes, elimination of buses, elimination of junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, reduced libraries, elimination of special education programs, French immersion, instrumental music, ESL, alternative education, elementary library, extracurricular sports, developmentally challenged assistance, overcrowded schools, obsolete equipment including computers, reduced maintenance, reduced administration and weaker discipline.

"As concerned parents and citizens of this province, we urge you to sign this petition, which will be presented to

the Premier as a reflection of our serious concerns over this agenda. In addition, we urge you to write to your MPP and voice your concerns. Act quickly, as the time of these proposed changes is next month."

This is unsigned.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALCOHOL, GAMING AND CHARITY FUNDING PUBLIC INTEREST ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 RÉGISSANT LES ALCOOLS, LES JEUX ET LE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE DANS L'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 75, An Act to regulate alcohol and gaming in the public interest, to fund charities through the responsible management of video lotteries and to amend certain statutes related to alcohol and gaming / Projet de loi 75, Loi réglementant les alcools et les jeux dans l'intérêt public, prévoyant le financement des organismes de bienfaisance grâce à la gestion responsable des loteries vidéo et modifiant des lois en ce qui a trait aux alcools et aux jeux.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, before we proceed, I have a point of order. This is a very strong one. It is common practice in this House, outside of the very old days of the Tory government, that the opposition know after question period what bills will be dealt with on a particular day, and here the government has just now announced what bill it's going to deal with. Is this not unusual? Does it not concern you, as Speaker of this House?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): To address the point of order from the member for St Catharines, it matters not how usual it is or concerning to me. It's just a matter of the rules, and as far as I can see, the government hasn't broken or abrogated any of the rules of this Legislature. So I will look to the Liberal member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to rise and participate in this debate. One of the issues that is probably of most concern in the province of Ontario today is Bill 75 and the advent of video lottery terminals. That doesn't sound very exciting to the people of Ontario, video lottery terminals, but what video lottery terminals are in effect, what they really are, is video slot machines.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, just on a point of order: I understand that the member for Niagara Falls was to have introduced a bill, and this is the last day, so I would seek unanimous consent — unfortunately, he didn't understand when this was to be done. I seek unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to introduce a bill from the member for Niagara Falls?

Mr Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: You know what? I —

Mr Michael Brown: I'm just trying to be helpful with this.

The Speaker: It's a point of order, so I would ask the member —

Mr Michael Brown: Mr Speaker, because the government was so tardy in informing the Legislature of what business was to be dealt with this afternoon, Mr Lalonde from our party was hoping that he would be able to speak to this bill at this particular time, and if the government is seeking unanimous consent for this bill, perhaps we could have unanimous consent for —

The Speaker: Member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I think I have a solution to this. I will seek unanimous consent for the member for Niagara Falls to introduce the bill, as well as unanimous consent to go to the member for Prescott-Russell in the order of rotation. Agreed.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Thank you, colleagues, on all sides of the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCOUNTABILITY IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA RESPONSABILISATION

Mr Maves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Audit Act to improve the accountability of hospitals, school boards, universities and colleges, municipalities and other organizations which receive payments from the government / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics en vue d'améliorer la responsabilisation au sein des hôpitaux, des conseils scolaires, des universités et des collèges, des municipalités et d'autres organisations qui reçoivent des paiements du gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Any short comments, the member for Niagara Falls?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Yes, a quick explanation: The purpose of the bill is to enable the Provincial Auditor to conduct audits of organizations and other bodies such as school boards, hospitals, universities in respect of payments received from the consolidated revenue fund or government agencies. It acts primarily on a recommendation from the Provincial Auditor.

ALCOHOL, GAMING AND CHARITY FUNDING PUBLIC INTEREST ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 RÉGISSANT LES ALCOOLS, LES JEUX ET LE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES DE BIENFAISANCE DANS L'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

(continued)

The Speaker: Now we go back to rotation. The member for Prescott and Russell.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I'm delighted to be able to participate in the debate of this bill, the VLT bill, Bill 75, a bill called by the French people le projet de loi du poison vif. It is a pure poison bill.

Mr Speaker, as you know, we have over 550,000 francophones in Ontario, so to give a chance to those who are following this very important debate on the French channel, I will be addressing this assembly in French and English.

La dernière fois que j'ai pris la parole en faveur d'un projet de loi, c'était le projet de loi 60, qui avait pour but de sauvegarder les emplois de nos travailleurs de la construction. Aujourd'hui je veux parler contre le projet de loi 75, qui apportera de la misère et qui va contribuer à l'éclatement de nos nombreuses familles en Ontario.

I know what the casinos are. I know what the VLTs are going to be in our community. As I said, it's pure poison for the community. We have had some data that the people of Ontario oppose this bill by 62%. I hope the government is going to listen to the people of Ontario; 62 % des personnes de l'Ontario s'opposent à ce projet de loi.

C'est quoi, le projet de loi 75 ? Beaucoup de personnes se demandent qu'est-il, le projet de loi VLT ? C'est une loi qui permettra au gouvernement d'installer des machines à loterie vidéo, «slot machines», dans les restaurants, dans les bars et dans les hôtels en Ontario. Il y a quelques instants, un maximum de 30 minutes, le premier ministre de l'Ontario nous a dit ici-même en Chambre qu'on n'aurait pas de vidéo dans nos restaurants et dans nos hôtels. Est-ce qu'on va le croire ? Immédiatement, environ deux minutes après cette déclaration il a dit : «Je n'ai pas dit des loteries-vidéo ; j'ai dit "vidéo".» Qu'est-ce que c'est ?

Depuis in certain temps 32 paroisses de mon comté de Prescott et Russell m'ont fait parvenir des pétitions signées par des milliers de personnes qui sont contre ce projet de loi. Nous connaissons ce qui arrive dans d'autres provinces. Je vais me référer à la Nouvelle-Écosse, où on a décidé de retirer un nombre de ces machines. Pourquoi ? Parce que les personnes dépendent de ces machines. C'est presque impossible. Je peux vous dire que je fréquente assez souvent les casinos et que l'on peut devenir, comme on dit en anglais : You become addicted to video machines. So are we going to have the sign at the entrance of Ontario: "Welcome to Organized Crime in Ontario"? Ce n'est certainement pas ça qu'on veut. Est-ce que nous voulons souhaiter la bienvenue aux gens d'autres provinces et pays qui nous visitent qui vont nous dire : «Nous rentrons en Ontario avec l'enseigne qui dit, "Bienvenue au crime organisé en Ontario"» ?

Chers amis, chers collègues de l'opposition ou du gouvernement, c'est un très grand danger. J'ai regardé des articles dans le journal Le Droit récemment. On disait que l'héritage de la pauvreté était le casino. Maintenant l'héritage de la pauvreté dans toutes nos petites communautés seront les loteries-vidéo, les machines à sous.

Le curé de la paroisse Sainte-Euphémie de Casselman m'a fait parvenir une pétition qui dit de mettre des pressions sur le gouvernement afin que l'on ne passe pas à la troisième lecture.

1530

J'ai ici une résolution de la corporation du canton de Clarence. On me dit de voter contre le projet de loi.

Chers amis, lorsque nous allons voir ces machines vidéo dans les environs des collèges, des écoles secondai-

res, des universités, si on pense seulement qu'une personne peut remporter 5000 \$, 500 \$, 50 \$, vous verrez que l'argent qu'on détient, l'argent de poche que les parents donnent aux enfants, aux étudiants pour leur goûter de midi va être dépensé dans les machines.

Pourquoi voulons-nous avoir cet argent, des pauvres surtout ? C'est parce qu'on veut aider à payer le 30 % de réduction d'impôts aux gens de l'Ontario. Les gens les plus riches vont bénéficier. Je me demande si les gens de la province sont au courant de combien ce 30 % de coupures d'impôts va coûter en Ontario. C'est un montant qui va coûter au-delà de 17 milliards de dollars aux payeurs de taxes de l'Ontario, et ça juste pour réduire aux riches le 30 % d'impôts.

J'ai fait des calculs ; j'ai fait des recherches. Dans la région de Hawkesbury, le pourcentage des dames bénéficieront de \$1,25 par semaine. C'est ça, la coupure. Mais on doit payer pour les services de bibliothèque, on doit payer pour les services de loisir. On doit avoir une augmentation de la facturation d'eau. On doit avoir une augmentation de la facturation des vidanges. Donc, tout ça pour dire que nous allons remettre aux plus riches de la province un montant de 17 milliards de dollars par l'an 2000. Est-ce que c'est juste, mes chers amis ? Je ne crois pas.

Je voudrais aller un peu plus loin. Dans ma circonscription seulement, une dame a été acquittée de 80 000 \$, une séparation de famille ou un divorce, je pourrais dire. Elle bénéficiait de 80 000 \$. Qu'est-ce que vous pensez est arrivé à cette somme ? Les 80 000 de dollars ont été dépensés dans les machines illégales que nous avons en Ontario. Si nous voyons actuellement au-delà de 20 000 à 25 000 machines illégales en Ontario, nous n'avons aucune protection. Je crois que le solliciteur général ou le procureur général devrait faire son grand possible actuellement de surveiller ces machines illégales. Étant donné que nous ne pouvons pas surveiller ces machines illégales, est-ce que nous allons être capables de surveiller les machines lorsqu'elles seront en place légalement ? Je ne crois pas.

Actuellement, nous avons déclaré dans une région ici au Canada que nous avons modifié 130 de ces machines-là afin qu'elles atteignent les normes de l'Ontario qui seront insérées parmi les autres machines dans nos restaurants, et puis là, vous verrez, il sera impossible de voir à ce que ces machines soient légales. Tout ce que nous allons faire, nous allons entrer dans un endroit qui a deux machines. Nous allons y insérer une autre, deux autres, trois autres. Je connais une place où on me dit qu'il y a 17 de ces machines-là et la personne s'en vante dans le moment. Elle dit qu'elle gagne 300 000 \$ par année de ces machines.

Mais j'ai une petite nouvelle pour ces gens-là qui veulent continuer. Ils sont fiers peut-être de voir que le gouvernement va permettre ces machines. Mais chers amis qui écoutent à la télévision aujourd'hui, seulement 10 % de vos revenus de ces machines vont demeurer à l'établissement. Dix pour cent s'en vont vers les charités. Quelles organismes charitables vont bénéficier dans les secteurs ruraux ? Nous n'avons qu'apprécier Wintario. Wintario a été mis en place pour aider les organismes sportifs. Aujourd'hui, plus un sou demeure là. On va dire

qu'on va prendre 10 % pour être distribué au secteur de la charité. Je n'y crois pas.

Mais le gouvernement a reconnu qu'il y a un très grand danger avec ce projet de loi. Nous avons à l'intérieur de notre projet de loi un montant de 2 % des revenus qui vont être concentrés pour les personnes qui dépendent de ces machines. Donc, nous avons déjà reconnu qu'il y a un danger. Je crois que le gouvernement devrait le reconnaître. Je regarde dans le moment ici un dépliant, une publication que j'ai reçue aujourd'hui. C'est intitulé «Dead Broke». Vous n'avez qu'à regarder à l'intérieur, et à la page couverture nous voyons un cimetière. Pourquoi voyons-nous ça ? C'est la continuité de ce qui existe et ça va même empirer ce que nous voyons dans les casinos.

Je connais un casino où ça fait neuf suicides à l'intérieur. La personne a perdu au-delà de 8 000 \$ un soir. Il est rentré dans son appartement et était tout frustré. Il a donné un coup de pied sur un baril, un fusil, et finalement il l'a pris et s'est tué. À un autre endroit on parle de 76 000 \$ de dettes. J'ai une coupure du journal *Le Droit* qui a paru récemment qui dit qu'un couple est devenu dépendant de ces machines au casino et ils ont tout perdu. Rappelez-vous, chers amis, lorsqu'on commence à fréquenter ces endroits, on veut toujours gagner. J'en connais un autre qui a gagné 25 \$ mille. Il n'y a rien de tel, parce que là c'est juste l'attrait que nous aurons.

Ces machines, quand on dit qu'on va payer 78 % du temps, est-ce que nous avons déjà fait le calcul de ce que va rapporter les 78 % ? Je demande aux «backbenchers» de l'autre côté surtout de faire l'addition. Je suis convaincu que la majorité des membres élus du gouvernement sont contre ce projet de loi, mais M. Harris et ses collègues désirent aller de l'avant avec ce projet de loi qui va faire des séparations et des divorces additionnels, des suicides vont survenir, des faillites vont survenir. Qu'est-ce qui va survenir, comme j'ai dit au tout début ? Nous allons encourager le crime en Ontario, et c'est ça que je vois venir avec ce projet de loi.

Chers amis, je pourrais vous lire plusieurs lettres. Le journal *Le Droit* disait :

«Le casino...est un cadeau empoisonné.

«Les restaurateurs ont des maux de ventre, les organismes de charité hurlent de douleur, les entreprises de services sont en mauvaise santé...le "poison" commence à faire son effet, estiment plusieurs...moteurs de l'économie.»

J'ai un autre article qui nous dit que les gérants de banque maintenant sont allés chercher tous les revenus de certains groupes qui actuellement ont endetté la famille pour venir en bout de gagner leur argent.

J'en ai un autre :

«Rêves et vies brisés.

«La pauvreté au grand jour.

«Les gens n'ont plus peur de la fin du monde, ils ont peur de la fin du mois.»

«Ce sont plutôt les appels du gérant de banque qui provoquent des insomnies.»

Je crois qu'il est très important que ce gouvernement ne vote pas en faveur de ce projet de loi.

J'ai d'autres commentaires ici. Je me rappelle que mon collègue d'Ottawa-Rideau a dit en Chambre un jour : «Nous n'avons qu'arrêter les personnes qui ont des

machines illégales.» Pourquoi n'avons-nous pas procédé de même dans le passé ? C'est à ce demander. Les policiers actuellement ont les mains liées et ne peuvent pas les arrêter. J'ai une autre personne qui entrain dans mon bureau l'autre jour pour me dire : «Monsieur le député, je m'en viens vous voir. Heureusement que j'ai une bonne épouse. Mais ce que j'ai vu ce matin est non tolérable. Je suis entré chez un dépanneur qui avait 17 de ces machines. Un jeune homme est entré et il a commencé à jouer sur ces machines illégales. Après un certain temps son épouse est entrée avec leur bébé dans ses bras et avec leur chèque de bien-être social. Il a encaissé le chèque et a tout joué dans la machine.

«C'est intolérable. Nous avons averti la Sûreté provinciale. C'est elle qui doit faire l'enquête maintenant.» C'est juste pour vous dire que cet homme âgé de 65 ans a réalisé le danger de ces machines.

1540

J'ai souvent été à Las Vegas, à Atlantic City, à la Nouvelle-Écosse, même au Minnesota. J'ai visité tous les endroits où sont les machines — pas tous les endroits. J'ai même été au Monaco voir les casinos. Savez-vous ce que le chauffeur de taxi m'a dit à Las Vegas ? Il a un gros danger. «Le vendredi soir, lorsque je reçois ma paie, la première chose que je fais, je vais acheter mes "groceries". Sinon, je n'aurai pas d'argent pour faire manger ma famille.»

Donc, chers amis, en Ontario nous avons 33 inspecteurs seulement pour la Régie des alcools. Est-ce que nous avons l'intention d'augmenter le nombre d'inspecteurs ? Sinon il n'y aura aucun, aucun contrôle sur ces machines. Comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure, nous allons avoir une série de machines illégales qui vont être installées dans les restaurants, dans les hôtels, dans les bars, et puis aucune manière par laquelle les gens pourront les détecter, à l'exception d'ouvrir les machines pour voir.

Lorsque je dis que nous avons seulement 33 inspecteurs, si nous sommes intéressés à aller chercher de l'argent en Ontario sans aller aux coupures de 30 % que nous projectons, que les gens vont payer, dont seulement les gros salariés vont bénéficier, je crois qu'il y a beaucoup d'autres manières. J'ai présenté un projet de loi le 4 juin dernier. Je disais qu'en Ontario, nous perdons de 14 000 à 15 000 emplois par année. Qu'avons-nous fait depuis ? Vous allez voir mercredi prochain ce que fera le gouvernement du Québec. Vous allez voir que nous n'avons pas gagné un pouce.

J'ai un bel exemple ici. Si le gouvernement de l'Ontario était si sérieux d'aller recueillir autant de l'argent possible, vous n'avez qu'à regarder l'ambassade des États-Unis qu'on prévoit construire à Ottawa, seulement une taxe. Les dirigeants de l'ambassade nous ont dit que tout entrepreneur était exempt de la taxe. Nous avons appelé revenu Ontario ici. Il y a une perte de 2.718 millions de dollars parce que la compagnie du Québec doit entreprendre les travaux. Je n'ai pas peur de dire que nous avons arrêté la construction. Ce sont des revenus que nous perdons pour la province, et je crois que le gouvernement devrait prendre ça au sérieux.

J'ai une lettre —

Mr Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we need a quorum to hear the words of the member for Prescott and Russell.

The Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Prescott and Russell.

Mr Lalonde: I was getting to another letter that I received just recently from the Premier's riding, from North Bay itself. A contractor wrote me a letter last week stating that he had just lost a contract to a Quebec firm. When I say we are able to get our money in other places but to go to the VLTs, to the slot machines, this contractor is right in the town of Mike Harris, the Premier. He lost the contract by \$60,000.

Do you know how much in taxes we are losing in this? Some \$135,000 in retail sales tax, besides the income tax, besides other services. We will have people in North Bay who will be on welfare. I was in North Bay, and when they allow those VLTs in North Bay, what is going to happen in the centre of town? I was down there. They have the most beautiful commercial sector that any small municipality would have, in two and a half blocks. Twenty-two stores are closed right in North Bay. When we say that this is going to affect the economy, I don't know what's going to happen in North Bay.

If you go to Cornwall, it's even worse. If I go to Hawkesbury, it's in poor shape because of the economy. When I look at all those charitable bingos that we have at the present time, we do feel the opening of the casino in our place, and I'm sure in Rama, I'm sure in Windsor, and I'm sure it's going to be happening right in Niagara Falls. People will suffer; the economy will suffer.

Je pourrais vous dire que le gouvernement libéral en 1990 n'a pas eu recours aux revenus illégaux qui allaient briser les familles. Il a fini avec un surplus de 90 \$ millions en 1990. Êtes-vous capable de me dire —

L'hon Noble A. Villeneuve (ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): C'était un accident.

M. Lalonde: Le député de Stormont, Dundas et Glengarry, l'honorable M. Villeneuve, êtes-vous capable de me dire quel autre gouvernement a réussi comme le gouvernement libéral de M. Peterson ? Ce n'est pas un accident.

Le Vice-Président (M. Gilles Morin): Vous aurez l'occasion de répondre tout à l'heure, si vous voulez attendre patiemment.

M. Lalonde: Je regrette de voir que l'honorable ministre s'objecte aux points que je soulève, mais vous avez certainement reçu des lettres de votre comté, parce que j'en ai reçu ici qui sont contre les VLT, contre ces machines «slot machines».

Espérons que le gouvernement va prendre en considération les problèmes qui peuvent survenir en Ontario. C'est très important que nous analysons tous les points lorsqu'on dit qu'on veut donner l'autorité administrative aux municipalités. Est-ce que nous avons consulté les municipalités pour voir si nous étions en faveur de l'installation des VLTs ? Nous allons voir la redistribution de nos comtés, nous allons voir l'amalgamation des municipalités,

mais encore là c'est qu'on veut couper les coûts. Lorsque nous avons une voix dans notre propre municipalité pour nous adresser à un conseiller ou à un maire, maintenant nous allons faire des distances incroyables afin de contacter notre maire juste pour dire que nous voulons atteindre nos objectifs qui n'ont pas été analysés, le fait de réduire l'impôt de 30 % aux hauts salariés de cette province.

Encore une fois j'espère que nous n'aurons pas l'identification de la province du crime dans un avenir proche. J'espère que nous allons retenir ce projet de loi le plus longtemps possible afin que nos familles, nos organismes de charité peuvent continuer à fonctionner comme on fait dans le moment. Il sera impossible dans les régions où nous allons installer ces machines-là.

J'ai un point que je devrais faire. L'autre jour, jeudi dernier, j'ai eu un appel. On m'a dit, en m'appelant par mon prénom : «Jean-Marc, il y a un hôtel dans Vanier et j'aimerais installer des machines vidéo. On s'attendait à ce qu'on pourrait remplir une salle de machines vidéo, de VLTs.»

J'ai dit : «Monsieur et Madame, ne croyez pas faire de l'argent avec ça. Vous allez avoir 10 %, et lorsque la personne rentre dans le restaurant ou dans l'hôtel avec 10 \$, est-ce que le profit sur les repas n'est pas plus haut que 10 % ? Est-ce que le profit sur les bouteilles de bière n'est pas plus haut que 10 % ? L'argent va se dépenser dans ces machines-là, elle va laisser la région où nous allons collectionner ces argents-là auprès des VLTs et elle ne reviendra pas dans la région. Nous allons appauvrir les régions.»

Après ça on va dire : «Mais c'est votre conseil municipal qui a décidé ça. Vous avez complètement oublié de consulter votre conseil municipal.»

For those who didn't understand what I'm saying at the present time, it's funny, the government keeps saying, "We have to give more authority to the municipalities." But in this case, I've never heard the government saying, "We have contacted the municipalities to see if they were in favour." I've received 12 letters from municipalities that are against VLTs. If the government at this time is not able or capable of supervising the 20,000 to 25,000 illegal VLTs that we have here in Ontario — that is the number that has been thrown at us by your own government, not us; that was told to us last week right here in the chamber — I just don't know, gentlemen, how you are going to control those illegal machines.

1550

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

M. Gilles Pouliot (Lac-Nipigon): Je prends plaisir à commenter en bref sur les propos que notre ami, notre collègue de Prescott et Russell, a souligné. Il l'a fait avec passion parce que, comme vous le savez si bien, quand on parle de ce vice, quand on parle de cette séduction, de cet appât, quand on parle d'un gouvernement qui est insatiable, qui a besoin à travers tous les moyens d'aller chercher les derniers cinq sous dans les poches de vos petits-enfants, la situation est une situation grave, une situation de crise.

On parle ici des écoles. Il n'y a plus de lieux sacrés. Le bruit de ses pas, le son de sa voix, mais le citoyen n'y est pas. Le citoyen ne peut pas dire «Non.» L'opium, ces opiums, pour séduire jusqu'aux derniers 10 cents, jusqu'aux

derniers cinq cents. Où est parti le moralité ? Où est parti l'autonomie des conseils scolaires ? Où sont allés les qualités, les vertus qui font qu'une société respecte les uns les autres ? C'est la soif du pouvoir accompagné de celle de l'argent, sans dimension humaine, sans consultation. C'est lui, ce soldat de Prescott et Russell, qui encore une fois nous l'a rappelé. Je le félicite. Vous aussi, Monsieur le Président. Mes hommages.

L'hon. M. Villeneuve: Il me fait plaisir de faire des commentaires sur le discours de mon collègue, mon ami de Prescott et Russell.

Premièrement, nous avons dans la province de l'Ontario de 20 000 à 25 000 machines qui sont absolument illégales. Il est question de retirer ces machines-là pour que ce soit bel et bien légalisé.

Mon collègue de Prescott et Russell, je crois à un moment donné que j'ai lu dans le Citizen d'Ottawa qu'il avait visité le casino de Hull, avait gagné des dollars assez considérables qu'il a cru sage de ramener en Ontario. Je le félicite, parce qu'au casino de Hull — je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de visiter ni le casino de Hull ni le casino de Montréal, mais par contre, il y a des plaques ontariennes en masse qui visitent ces endroits-là.

Quand on dit que nous avons de 20 000 à 25 000 machines illégales en Ontario, ça nous fait penser, ça nous fait songer sérieusement que si le gouvernement pouvait contrôler cette opération tellement illégale, ce serait peut-être quelque chose de bon. Quand nous voyons les plaques ontariennes qui visitent le Québec, qui visitent la ville de Montréal, et il n'y a certainement rien de mal à visiter la ville de Montréal ou la ville de Hull, et les gens de Hull et de Montréal sont certainement bienvenus en Ontario, mais il y a une question référendaire qui se pose dans la ville d'Alexandria aujourd'hui même, comme on parle, dans le moment, pour voir si les gens d'Alexandria vont choisir une question de casino. La réponse va être très intéressante.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I just want to congratulate my colleague from Prescott and Russell. I'm happy to have heard the intervention from the Minister of Agriculture. I too live in the area served by the Ottawa Citizen. I read it carefully. I've been watching with some interest, as I know the member from Prescott and Russell would have seen, the ongoing reports and deep-seated concern about some of the impacts of the Hull casino. In fact, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Gatineau, among others, is in the Ottawa Citizen expressing a very genuine concern about a situation that's now occurring in Gatineau, which is a suburban part of west Ottawa, in Quebec, obviously. We have a situation where there is a soup kitchen that has had a very substantial increase in business since the Hull casino opened, and that should surprise no one, because the pockets of people have been depleted. There are scores of additional people who have gambled away their money. They are going to the soup kitchen. The way the soup kitchen in Gatineau has funded itself is with a bingo licence. The bingo has been just destroyed.

I'm telling you what is being reported in the Ottawa press. We have a situation, and I ask my friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, what's

wrong with this picture? We've got a soup kitchen whose business has gone up dramatically because the Hull casino has opened and is generating a lot more business, and the way the soup kitchen in Gatineau has been funded is with a bingo. The bingo is now basically destroyed because all of the money is going to the Hull casino.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): Bingo is gambling too.

Mr Conway: Of course it's gambling, but there is a qualitatively different kind of gambling involved. I want to say that I want to associate myself with the concerns of the Roman Catholic bishop of Gatineau and others who are faced with the tragic social consequences of gambling that has overreached itself, that's gone too far, and seeks to destroy the social equilibrium that surely we all want.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): This series of debates about this bill has been most troubling, especially when one reflects on the fact that there was available to this government a CISO report that the government sat on, that it hid. They denied its existence and then they stonewalled in response to requests to have the report made public. The question has to be asked, why? You see, this was a report about, among other things, organized crime.

What we discovered, once the report finally became available to the opposition, was that organized crime, the mob, has already entered the picture, because the very report that this government tried its damndest to keep secret was one that revealed that, yes, a prominent former member of an organized crime syndicate, one Lucio Sandrin, director and shareholder of Cadith Entertainments Ltd, was one of the submitters to the committee hearings, of course in support of video lottery terminals. Cadith Entertainments, this company that's so eager to get into partnership with this government in the development of electronic slots, VLTs, why, one of the directors of Cadith, one Frank Di Maria, currently faces numerous racketeering and grand theft charges in Florida over alleged skimming of funds from charity bingos.

These are the sort of people this government wants to get into a partnership with. This is why —

The Deputy Speaker: I won't accept that comment. I won't accept that comment at all. You won't associate the government with the members you are referring to. I won't accept that at all and I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr Kormos: Withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Kormos: It's people like Lucio Sandrin, former close associate in the Volpe mob, who wants to get into the slot machine business here in the province of Ontario. It's this legislation that opens the door to him and —

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired. Thank you. The member for Prescott-Russell, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Lalonde: First, I want to thank the members for their comments.

I'd just like to come back to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He just said a little while ago, "I haven't visited the one in Montreal, I haven't visited the one in Hull."

Monsieur le Ministre, si vous n'avez pas eu la chance de visiter ces casinos, comment pouvez-vous voter ? Comment pouvez-vous identifier lorsque ces personnes-là

deviennent adonnés ou deviennent dépendants de ces machines ? C'est vrai que j'ai gagné un certain montant, mais je crois que le tout était monté par votre parti. Lorsque je suis arrivé à Toronto, parti de là, j'ai aperçu dans le Toronto Sun que j'avais rapporté \$ 218. Nous y avons été visiter avec vos collègues, mais encore là, la presse m'a demandé, «Est-ce que maintenant tu es en faveur des VLTs ?» J'ai dit, «Cela ne me fera pas changer d'idée.»

Chers amis, j'ai un article ici qui vient de la paroisse Saint-Alphonse de Ligouri de Hawkesbury : «Le casino est un cadeau empoisonné qui a tué tous les bingos...et qui a privé les associations à but non lucratif, particulièrement celles qui s'occupent des pauvres, des loisirs et autres activités très louables.»

Je me demande ce que veut dans l'avenir notre ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales. Mon collègue M. Conway a mentionné tout à l'heure la souprière de Gatineau. C'est vrai. Nous avons un organisme à Gatineau, qui est juste de l'autre côté de la rivière. Nous connaissons les mêmes problèmes en Ontario. Les organismes à but non lucratif ont des difficultés à fonctionner. Les gens deviennent addicts au bingo, deviennent dépendent des vidéos. Ils se rendent là et dépensent tout leur argent. Les bingos ne fonctionnent plus, et maintenant nous devons assister plus souvent.

1600

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I am pleased to participate in the debate today on Bill 75. I have not been a member of the justice committee, but I did have the opportunity to participate in the public hearing that took place in my community on August 20. I wanted to go to that because I wanted to hear very clearly what people, not only in my community but from across northeastern Ontario, had to say about this particular piece of legislation. The comments I'm going to raise today very much reflect what people said at that hearing.

In beginning, I want to say that, quite contrary to the comments which were made by the member for Ottawa-Rideau in this chamber last week, all of northern Ontario does not support Bill 75 or the introduction of VLTs. I heard him stand in his place and tell this House that northern Ontario was very supportive. The fact of the matter is, in Sudbury there was overwhelming opposition to the government proposal.

We heard from the regional municipality of Sudbury, from a representative who had spent a great deal of time researching this particular matter, who had written to a number of police forces right across the country to try and get from them information with respect to increased crime with the introduction of video slots.

We heard from lottery ticket distributors who were totally opposed. We heard from a bingo hall owner, two in fact, who were completely opposed. We heard from a number of service clubs and social service agencies who as well made it clear that they were very much opposed to Bill 75, people like Mr Dan Piché, for example, who is an employee at Sudbury Family Service. In their case, Nevada ticket sales represent the second-highest source of their income and he is very concerned that if they lose that revenue, their social service agency will not be able

to continue to provide bilingual counselling to many families across the city of Sudbury.

We heard from Pat O'Malley, who was a representative of the Sudbury Board of Education Secondary School Principals' Association, who came because at his secondary school Nevada tickets allow that secondary school to sponsor over 30 co-curricular and athletic activities. He is very concerned that when they have to match up against VLTs, the revenues that they get now from Nevada are going to mean that high school cannot offer those programs to those students, and then what will they be doing?

We heard from Kit LeFroy, who came from Laurentian University Volleyball Club, same type of thing. The revenue that his teams raise through Nevada sales allow those teams to travel to volleyball tournaments right across the province. He was very concerned about what they would do with a loss in revenue and what would happen if they couldn't allow those teams to participate any more.

We had a representative from Elliot Lake who was the president of the Elliot Lake Vikings, which is a two-tier hockey system in Elliot Lake. The sale of Nevada tickets and the proceeds from the same allow them to support five travel teams in that community, allow them to bring in tournaments which also help to keep the arena functioning and also help to keep people employed in the concession.

Finally, we heard a very moving and a very powerful speech by Jacqueline Morvan, who came all the way from Kapuskasing to make a presentation to the committee in Sudbury. Mrs Morvan had been involved in any number of fund-raising activities in her community for many months now. She first became involved in raising money for minor hockey, where over 600 kids in Kapuskasing participate. She became involved then in raising money for people who were disabled in the community, who needed money for wheelchairs.

Her last project was to help raise funds for the roof at the swimming pool. Because the municipality didn't have enough money to repair it, it was closed down, and she went out and they raised some, I believe, \$30,000, if I'm correct, to help make those renovations. She made it exceptionally clear to the committee that if she and her organization could not rely on revenue from Nevada ticket sales, they would not be able to continue on with the very good work she is doing in her community.

The organizations which came forward in Sudbury by and large firmly believe that if they have to have their Nevada ticket sales compete against VLTs, they will lose. They made that clear time and again.

Let me just tell you what Patrick O'Malley said about that particular situation. He said: "It has been through our business of Nevada partnership that significant help has been forthcoming to help us make these purchases," — for their extracurricular activities — "and I'm convinced that if VLTs are introduced into the Sudbury community, the consequences are inevitable. The revenues from Nevada tickets will definitely be cut by a significant percentage, and I think that's true because VLTs, as I see them, are targeted directly against Nevada tickets. It is exactly the same kind of gaming."

Patrick O'Malley wasn't the only presenter who made the same case. Mr Piché from Sudbury Family Service

made the case as well, that the kind of gaming involved in VLTs, the people who would be attracted are the same people they rely on to purchase Nevada tickets, and they're the same people they rely on to purchase Nevada tickets whose proceeds from the same they want back into their community. They firmly believe that the introduction of VLTs into every bar and into every restaurant across our community will dramatically affect their organizations and the people they are trying to help, particularly families who need counselling, particularly young people they're trying to keep off the street, involved in other productive activities.

It also must be pointed out that every one of the organizations that came forward to oppose Bill 75 made it clear that they did not believe for one moment that the 10% share of revenues from the VLTs that the government says is going to come back to them will in fact come back to them. They made it absolutely clear that they do not believe they will be considered as charities by this government in order to receive 10% of that funding.

It was interesting that the parliamentary assistant tried very hard to tell any number of presenters that it was the government's intention and indeed the government was going to follow through on its intention that 10% of the proceeds, of the gross revenue that came from VLTs, would return to the charities.

As he was asking a question of Mr Piché, he said the following:

"I know one of your concerns is with respect to charities. Charities will receive 10% of the gross revenues from the video lotteries, so it's a substantial amount of money. The increase to charities will be up to \$180 million more than charities are receiving today in the province. It's a very substantial sum of money and we are going to have an implementation consultation following this enabling legislation...I would hope that organizations such as yours would want to participate in that consultation process, particularly with respect to what charities qualify, where permanent charity gaming halls should be located, the regulation of them and that sort of thing."

No one, but no one, bought in to the government line. No one believed the government when the government members came to Sudbury that day and said, "Trust us; 10% of the gross revenues are going to come back to charities."

In response to the parliamentary assistant's insistence that this was going to happen, a number of the groups said the following:

"*Mr Piché*: My only concern is that right now you have agencies who have their own fund-raising; they make their own money. Now Nevada sales, let's say, drop 50%. That money is being spent on local economies. If we put in VLTs, that money is now going to go to the provincial government. That money's going to get sucked out of the local economy. You say you're going to give it back to the charities, but more than likely it's not going to be in the same proportion. Like the money that's being spent in Sudbury now, part of that money may not come back to Sudbury. It could go to Toronto or to Ottawa."

1610

This is what Mr LeFroy said with respect to the parliamentary assistant's insistence that the revenues

would return. He was particularly concerned about what mechanism would be implemented to try and determine which group was in fact a legitimate charity and how, during the implementation process, the government was ever going to come up with any kind of reasonable formula that would select which charities were important, which should be considered for funding, which at the end of day should still be allowed to do good work in their community. He said it was impossible and he said it in this way:

Ontario is "a huge place and the needs in Chesley are different than the needs in London or in Sudbury or in Thunder Bay or wherever. I defy the wisest provincial minister, the wisest provincial bureaucrat to be able to make all those decisions in an enlightened, albeit very well-intentioned manner. It's beyond comprehension for me to believe that could happen."

You know what? He's exactly right. There is no way the government is going to be able to put in place a formula that will allow the many charities that are operating in our communities now to then be classified as charities under the new scheme and to receive some revenue. It's just not going to happen.

Don Primeau, who came from Elliot Lake to make a presentation at the hearing, replied in this way:

"Because we are a small community, the overall impact of video lottery terminals will be devastating. If this standing committee considers the effect of video lottery terminals in other provinces such as Alberta, where moneys promised to organizations have not been honoured, and some of those needed organizations have gone under as a result, then it should be easy to see that the same scenario is about to hit our province. The smaller communities face losing non-profit organizations and charitable organizations and will be placed in a position where these organizations will in all probability be lost for good."

I believe that is exactly the case. You only have to look at what has happened with respect to the Ontario Lottery Corp and the proceeds from the same to see that people in the community who are very concerned about whether the revenues will come back have a right to be concerned: \$27 million went out of the Sudbury community via Lotto 6/49 and other tickets last year. I ask you, how much of that do you think came back to do good work in our community? Not a whole heck of a lot, and I suspect that's the same thing across any number of communities in our province.

I have a small municipality in the east part of my riding; \$1 million went out of that community of 800 last year. What did they get in return? Nothing. That's why not only small communities but many service organizations, many social agencies that rely on the proceeds from Nevada tickets don't believe the government for a moment when the government says: "Don't worry. We'll look after you. You'll be designated as a charity. You're going to get 10% of the revenue." They don't believe it because that's not what happens with respect to Ontario Lottery Corp funding across any number of our communities.

If the government had really been serious about putting its money where its mouth is with respect to this issue,

then the government would have agreed with the opposition amendments that were put at committee that said, "Put it in the bill." If you believe it, if you have the guts to go out and tell any number of social service agencies throughout the public hearings and any number of communities that this is what's going to be done, then why didn't the government members accept the opposition amendments that would have clearly said in the bill that 10% of the gross revenues are coming back to charities in this province? The government members refused to do that. Any number of charitable groups that came before the committee should take that as a clear indication of what the government intends to do. That money is not going to be coming back to our communities.

Those organizations, big and small, that do very necessary work, very important work, right across our communities are not going to see this so-called 10% return. The small groups know very well that when they have to face big charitable organizations that have full-time fund-raisers, this government is not going to look at them, this government is not going to register them as charities. No one is fooled.

So at the end of the day, by the mere fact alone that the government members voted down this amendment that would have incorporated right into the bill that 10% of the gross revenues are coming back, by the mere fact that that wasn't put in, all of the local charities who came before the committee should take that as a sure sign that they're going to be cut out of this process, that there's no point whatsoever for them to participate in the implementation process because they don't have a hope in hell of being registered as charities by this government.

I think that's a real shame because people like Jacqueline Morvan and other people who do very good, very important work in their communities will not have a chance once the VLTs are introduced when the money doesn't come back to allow them to do the good work they have been doing for many years now.

I also frankly had some real problems believing the estimates on job creation which I heard bandied about during the public hearings in Sudbury. These figures were bandied about as being new jobs that would be created once we had video slot machines introduced into Ontario.

First with respect to the presentation made by the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association. There were two representatives there who made presentations. One of those, I should say, is a well-respected member in my community who, during the whole time I was minister, came to lobby me annually about our government introducing VLTs. And every single time I said that we were not interested and I was not personally interested in supporting that recommendation. To her credit, she came again to this committee because now she does have the ear of the government, a government that when it was in opposition was against the introduction of VLTs but now seems to have changed its mind on the road to Damascus and is prepared to introduce it.

They talked about, during their presentation, the fact that across their industry sales were down about 20%, that 100,000 jobs had been lost in Ontario, that there had been 1,400 bankruptcies in this industry since 1992. What they said at the committee hearing was that the introduction of

video slot machines was going to be the panacea for all of the hotel-motel industry's ills, that the introduction of VLTs in every bar, in every restaurant was going to mean a revitalization of this entire industry, that it was going to save them all. In fact, they also released a press release on the same day of the hearings to say the following: "Video lottery terminals will create 10,000 new jobs for our industry."

I had some difficulty understanding that and, frankly, some difficulty in really accepting it because I know that on August 7, Mr Ivan Sack, who is from the Canadian Casino News, appeared before the justice committee here in Toronto and had quite a bit to say about just how many jobs had been created in other jurisdictions when video slot machines were introduced. I found his remarks very interesting because, frankly, I thought it contrasted greatly to the anticipated job numbers that had been put out by the hotel-motel association. And it's worth repeating here what Mr Ivan Sack of Canadian Casino News, who knows a little bit about this industry, had to say before the committee on August 7:

"It is too early to say how many jobs would be created by placing VLTs in bars and at racetracks, as the racing industry has yet to completely weigh the tradeoffs in the decrease in its handle against the gains from the VLTs. However, given that the racing industry already has cashiers, the job gains here would be limited primarily to service attendants and repair people for the VLTs. The same would also apply to bars, where on the assumption that each licence is restricted to four VLTs, it would mean no additional bar staff, though additional attendants and roving repair people. The management control system would have to be staffed up and, depending upon the configuration used, additional jobs would be created here."

He gave the numbers in Quebec which showed that with 14,500 slots they were looking at 300 jobs to be created. We know there are some 20,000 machines that are probably going to be legalized in the province if and when this bill goes through, and that doesn't represent anywhere near the 10,000 jobs that the Ontario Hotel and Motel Association claims will be created if the government moves forward on this.

1620

Frankly, I also had trouble understanding the presentation that came from the racetrack Sudbury Downs. Sudbury Downs as well talked a great deal about all of the increase in employment that would go on at the track if VLTs were introduced. I just want to quote a couple of lines from what they said:

"Sudbury Downs is a gaming entertainment facility and as such embraces the pending video lottery opportunity to revive our on-track horse racing activity. We envision new life into our horse racing operation, more live racing dates and increased purses, and that will encourage more local ownership and attract other horsemen to our community."

Sudbury Downs went on, because they weren't satisfied just with ensuring the government members understood they wanted video slots right at the track, to talk about their offtrack betting facilities and really encouraged the government to guarantee that VLTs would also go into those premises. They said, "We feel that for all northern communities to benefit from this type of entertainment

within a limited and secure environment the distribution of video lottery terminals into our extended arm teletheatres is a must."

What I found interesting, and I found it interesting that the member for Niagara South when he was talking about the horse racing industry in his community didn't mention it, is that at the end of the day what Sudbury Downs wants is to guarantee that they and they alone have video slots at the track or at the operations offering teletheatre betting, but they were not interested whatsoever in the government putting VLTs either into other bars or other restaurants where they were not located. So, "It's okay to have VLTs as long as we get them, but if we're not going to get them exclusively, then you shouldn't have them anywhere in the province."

What I found really interesting is this real contradiction in the point of view that was put across by Sudbury Downs. They said, "We want them, we want them at the track, we want them where we have teletheatre betting, but don't have them anywhere else because it might cause social and economic concerns." Let me quote:

"We hold as a serious concern the irreparable damage suffered to our northern Ontario horse racing industry should VLTs be deployed on a massive scale at non-teletheatre sites. This situation has been documented in several other jurisdictions, including most recently the province of Manitoba.

"We are also concerned that a massive distribution of VLTs into a multitude of sites across the province could lead to the creation of serious, adverse socioeconomic consequences that have been experienced in some other jurisdictions."

How come it's okay if we've got them at the downs or it's okay if we've got them in our teletheatre sites, and that won't cause serious, irreparable damage to the fabric of our society, but if you have them anywhere else, it sure will? What a self-serving argument. I was amazed that a representative from this organization would come and make such a comment.

I wondered, as I listened to the member for Niagara South last week, whether or not that wasn't exactly the same situation that had been put forward by the Fort Erie Race Track. I'll bet, if I took a look at the presentation made to the committee by the Fort Erie Race Track, I'd see the same opinions: "We want them at our site but God forbid the government let them loose anywhere else because that'll cause social damage, that will cause economic damage. It's okay if we have them, but no one else should." What a ridiculous argument.

Again it's worth noting that when you go back to what Mr Sack said, it's very clear that he, who is no stranger to casinos, who is no stranger to gaming — he is after all the writer of *Canadian Casino News* — when you go back to his comments to the committee on August 7, he made it clear that all of the jobs that have been talked about, all of this increase in employment is really suspect. At the end of the day what you may have is an increase in employment because you have to hire people to look after the repair of the machines, but at the end of the day there has been no significant increase in employment in other jurisdictions at this point because of the decrease on the purse, and I think that's worth noting.

So all the rhetoric that we've heard from this government about the huge increase we're going to see in employment around the province with the introduction of video slots is just that — rhetoric. Mr Sack, who knows about these things, made it clear what had gone on in other jurisdictions and the fact that, despite the introduction of at least 14,000 in Quebec, you had only 300 jobs created, not anywhere near the 10,000 the hotel and motel association talked about, not anywhere near the hundreds that I'm sure all of the racetracks combined, if you add them all up with respect to their presentation, would have put forward.

I also want to talk a little bit about my concern at the government's complete dismissal of the OPP report. I know at the beginning of the hearings opposition members from the committee were made aware of the existence of this report. They didn't have a copy of it. The person who made them aware of it didn't have a copy but had seen it. They asked in the committee, at the very beginning of these hearings, that the government make available this particular report so the committee would have the benefit of the advice of the OPP and the benefit of understanding clearly what consequences the OPP felt were going to come with the legalization and the introduction of video slot machines in Ontario. It's interesting that the opposition members were told the report didn't exist. Its existence was denied by the government members, even though the committee members from the opposition side knew it existed, knew someone who had seen a copy of it.

I think it's just ridiculous that we are dealing with a bill of this magnitude and we know that there exists a report which outlines very serious concerns on the part of the OPP with respect to VLTs and with respect to the presence of organized crime in this province. The report, as we know from the review of it that went on on TV, makes two points very clearly: one, that legalization of video slots in the province does not remove the problem of illegal machines in the province; and two, that there is a definite link between video slot machines in the province and organized crime.

You would think that a government that was making a significant policy change — because there certainly is a significant policy change; when some of these people were in opposition they spoke ferociously against the introduction of VLTs in this province — that same group of people who are making a major shift in policy and direction and changing their direction entirely from when they were in opposition would at least be smart enough, be decent enough, to get a copy of the report and read what it says. The OPP, after all, is a provincial police force, it's your police force. Aren't you interested in what these folks have to say to you? You employ them, for goodness' sake. These are people who deal with gambling. The people who put the report together know something about what's happening in Ontario.

Not only is the report not released to the public, but the same people who are involved in writing it, who have expressed serious concerns about it, have not even been approached by this government to hear their views. We know that Detective Staff Sergeant Larry Moodie of the OPP's illegal gambling squad said, "I was never asked about input into Bill 75."

What is the responsibility of the Solicitor General in this respect? What is the responsibility of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, who is bringing this bill forward? Surely to goodness, when we know in this House, as we do now, that a briefing note on this very serious issue was prepared on March 18, it would have been the responsibility of one of them or both of them to get a copy of that report, to read about the concerns and to bring that very information before their cabinet colleagues and make sure that the entire cabinet knew about the very serious concerns being raised by the OPP about this very piece of legislation the government was proceeding on.

But these two ministers have hidden their heads in the sand. They have assumed no responsibility for what's happening. I wonder what they do at work every day, since both of them deny that they ever saw the briefing report, even though someone must have seen the whole document in order to prepare a note.

I find it unacceptable that these two ministers couldn't come forward, wouldn't come forward, refuse now to make this public, and the government itself is going to proceed despite the serious concerns raised by the OPP. I can only say it must be pretty sad that you folks are so desperate you would ignore these very, very important recommendations from your own police force.

1630

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Certainly I'd like to commend the member for Sudbury East. She truly reflects the mood that was present in the hearings in Sudbury and she's clarified the record, she's made sure that the record is straight. The people in the Sudbury region aren't in favour of VLTs. In fact, proportionately to the survey that was done, we would suggest that there are less people in Sudbury in favour of VLTs than in the —

Interjection.

Mr Bartolucci: Slot machines, VLTs — makes no difference. The people in Sudbury are upset with the direction that this government is taking. Let me make a couple of quotes to the House so that you'll understand how the people in Sudbury are thinking.

Austen Davey, who is a Sudbury city councillor: "These machines have a real ability to suck up money...they don't discriminate among the rent, grocery or leisure fund. You get four or five drinks into you and a VLT can suck up the rent in a hurry." That's from a member of the city council. He's concerned. The entire city council is concerned.

If you listen to the Addiction Research Foundation person, Rosa Dragonetti: "VLTs are the crack cocaine of gambling. Other provinces have had serious problems with these machines and we will too."

They're giving us advance warning. We have to make changes in the direction we're going. Will the government listen? Will they listen to Ross Hastings, who said, "The upper echelons of organized crime are not losing any sleep over (the government decision to legalize VLTs)"?

We must listen to the experts. We must listen to the people of Ontario. They want this government to take a different direction. They're not satisfied that this is the way we get out of debt.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to commend the member for Sudbury East for the comments she gave that were right on topic, right to the issue, and exactly what has been heard at all of the various hearings we've had on this issue.

The government is interesting. They sit there on the one hand on a secret report. Why? Because the secret report is a report that is negative to the government and a report that has indicated within it, according to some sources, that the people in organized crime in this province are actually associated with this particular matter. I just say to the government, on the one hand you guys try to close your eyes to what's going on within the secret report that basically said you have a problem in this area, and on the other hand you try to take credit when things are right. You can't have it both ways.

The government has to take its responsibility and it has to be accountable to the people of Ontario. Certainly what we're seeing with this particular report is a government that says there is a report there, and the Solicitor General says he hasn't read it, he hasn't seen it, he hasn't been briefed about it. You have to ask yourself the question: Is the minister doing his job?

The answer to that question is one of two: Either the minister doesn't know what's going on in the ministry, at which point he is incompetent and should not be the minister responsible, or, on the other hand, the minister was trying to hide information and not make it public so that people didn't get an opportunity to see it. I would only want to guess which one it is, depending.

The point is, why were they not trying to get the report to go forward and why didn't they want it to be public? It was very simple: They were hiding it because it was bad news to the government, it was a report that said there were all kinds of problems in regard to organized crime being involved with this particular industry, and that by the government moving forward on VLTs there was an opening to allow the mob to get involved in the particular business, which the government is saying they want to snuggle up to and get in bed with. I really wonder —

The Speaker: Order. The member for Cochrane South, that is out of order. I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw, Speaker.

Mr Flaherty: I listened with interest to the remarks of the member for Sudbury East, who was present at the justice committee hearings the one day that the justice committee sat in Sudbury on this subject. The committee sat for a total of I believe it was 14 days, and we heard from presenters not only in Sudbury but also in Kenora and Thunder Bay and Fort Erie and Sarnia and Ottawa and Toronto.

The majority of the persons who made presentations to us were very supportive of this legislation in the racetrack industry, which employs many people in this province, many of who otherwise might well not be employed, and also in the hospitality sector.

I want to address one specific point that I heard the member for Sudbury East speaking about, and that is break-open tickets and the suggestion or evidence before the committee at the hearings that break-open tickets would be adversely affected by the introduction of video lotteries. The evidence is not so.

In Alberta, for example, there is no evidence that the break-open ticket revenue declined directly related to the introduction of video lotteries. In Atlantic Canada, where there's experience in this regard again, break-open ticket sales experienced little or no impact as a result of the introduction of video lotteries.

These are the factual situations, the realities, the on-the-ground happenings that we're able to access because eight other provinces in Canada have experience in this matter, and this is some of the information that, fortunately, we're able to have as part of the committee.

This is, of course, framework legislation and not implementation legislation, and there will be more work to do, which the government acknowledges, on the implementation front, particularly with respect to various forms of gaming like break-open tickets.

Mr Michael Brown: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks of the member for Sudbury East, but in doing so, I think members of the House would be interested to know that, as she mentioned, various communities across northern Ontario have expressed great interest in this bill.

One of those that she didn't allude to was Espanola. I received from the Espanola hospital auxiliary a letter that says very clearly they do not want to see slot machines in Espanola. They believe it will impact on the revenues that the hospital auxiliary receives by way of break-open tickets and other such raffles, and they will not be able to help the hospital and maintain the hospital. The Espanola town council has passed a resolution that objects to having slot machines in Espanola. Places like Elliot Lake also object, and many of the other small communities within my constituency share the view of Ontarians.

Just to be clear, asked in a very recent poll, "Would you support or oppose the introduction of video slot machines in bars, restaurants and taverns in your neighbourhood?" do you know what the support level is? It's 32%, with 62% of people opposed.

Asked another question, "What impact do you think the introduction of video slot machines in local bars, restaurants and taverns would have on the level of crime in the province? Would it cause it to increase?" 51% of Ontarians believed that. Only 2% believe it would decrease crime — 2%. Quite unbelievable. Considering that this party that is now the government campaigned against this very issue, I ask you to reconsider your decision.

1640

Mr Kormos: One of the things that's warranted here is a series of questions. Some of them have been asked. Why did the government sit on the CISO report? Was it because the CISO report revealed that organized crime was already involved in the solicitation and support of this government in their bid to have VLTs established?

We know there are millions and millions of dollars to be made and we know VLTs attract organized crime and the mob the way cow flops attract flies. This government knows it or ought to know it and ought to be a little more candid about the reality of it.

It knew that people like Lucio Sandrin, director and shareholder of Cadith Entertainments Ltd, was the author of one of the submissions to the committee calling upon this government to get those video slots into play as

quickly as possible. Who's Lucio Sandrin? Who's this character that the government would call upon for support for its proposition? Lucio Sandrin's described to me as a prominent former member of an organized crime syndicate who is currently the operator of a number of bingo and charity casinos here in the province of Ontario. Who's his partner? Another Cadith director, Frank Di Maria. He's some clown down in Florida facing charges for racketeering and grand theft over alleged skimming of funds from charity bingos. These are the people who were named and identified in the CISO report as being supportive and prepared to support and eagerly advocating that this government get the slots out there as quickly as possible.

The question has to be asked, why wasn't Larry Moodie of the OPP's illegal gambling squad consulted in any way, shape or form by this government before it embarked on its video slot machine campaign, building this little warren where the mob and organized crime could find shelter —

The Speaker: To the member for Welland-Thorold, I realize that you did get in as the fifth member. I thought you might give me some cooperation with your comments. It would have been convenient. To sum up, the member for Sudbury East.

Mr Kormos: Do I have to withdraw anything, Speaker?

The Speaker: If you want to just make a categorical withdrawal, that's fine by me.

Ms Martel: In the two minutes that I have, let me point out that the government has tried repeatedly through the course of the public hearings and in debate on this legislation in this House to put some kind of positive spin on the introduction of electronic slot machines in the province of Ontario.

They have said, for example, that we shouldn't worry, that these things aren't going to be in every bar, in every restaurant across our community, that they aren't going to be around schools so we shouldn't worry about kids being able to have access to VLTs. They told all the charities when they were out on the road not to worry, that in fact they will be considered a charity, that they will get 10% of the gross revenue from VLTs and that they're going to be able to continue the good work they do in the community.

They have told everyone that 2% of the revenue from the proceeds that come from VLTs will in fact go back into our communities for addiction rehabilitation. I say to the government then, why is it that when you were in committee doing clause-by-clause on this bill, you did not accept the amendments that would have put those things right into the legislation?

AMO sent in resolutions saying: "We don't want these things near schools. Put something in the bill that would do something about that." That went nowhere. The opposition members put in an amendment that said, "Put it right in the bill: 10% of the gross receipts from the take are going to come back to local charities." That didn't make its way into the bill. The opposition said, "Put into the bill itself that 2% of the receipts are going to go back into addiction rehabilitation." The government refused to put that into the bill itself. The people out there don't believe you when you tell them that they're going to be

able to continue with their good work. They don't believe. That's the perception. I suspect that's going to be the reality if and when this bill passes.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Flaherty: The member for Sudbury East of course makes the reference that's been made before in this House to Bill 75 as introducing video lotteries in the province of Ontario. I thought it was fairly clear from all of the evidence that the committee heard and from the speeches in this House that the reality is that we have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000 to 25,000 illegal video lotteries in this province that are already introduced; they're here.

If the member for Welland-Thorold and the member for Sudbury East want to talk about organized crime, they might reflect on who today and in past years has been profiting from the illegal video lotteries in Ontario. Indeed, if they want to reflect on the history of gambling in North America, they might reflect on the fact that the golden age of organized crime in North America coincided with the period in which government did not provide any gaming services to the public.

This legislation helps the government gain control over gaming in Ontario. We have presently thousands of Monte Carlo nights and hundreds of operators. This presents, since they're moving, tremendous control problems for the government and for the gaming commission. Similarly, we have thousands of illegal video lotteries, and again this presents a control problem for regulation of gaming in the province.

The remedies prescribed in Bill 75 include the creation of permanent charity gaming halls and the legalization of video lotteries in controlled environments in the province. A system of fully regulated video lotteries will recapture much of the illegal revenue and displace many of the illegal machines. Indeed, this has been the experience in the province of Quebec, where, since the introduction of video lotteries as legal machines, they have captured 8,000 illegal machines, which we heard during the committee hearings.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Members of the third party, I would ask you to come to order. The member for Durham Centre is speaking, and I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing him.

I just thought that while I'm up it would seem appropriate to recognize Mr Larry O'Connor, who was the member for Durham-York in the last Parliament. Welcome.

Mr Flaherty: Gaming is a social reality in Ontario, and the majority of persons in Ontario view gaming as a form of entertainment and do not abuse it. Most people use these forms of gaming wisely.

When we look at the objective studies that have been done, which the committee did look at, we find, for example, the study by the University of Windsor and the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling showing that the introduction of a major new form of gambling, such as VLs or casinos, does not affect addiction rates in areas in which there is already substantial gaming. That's the study we have; that's the reality we have from the study that was done at the University of Windsor, where of course there is a casino.

Similarly in Manitoba, the Brandon University study, the research there showed that less than 2% of the population are potential compulsive gamblers.

Again, these are the realities that the Legislature, in my submission, should consider when we're considering an important piece of legislation such as Bill 75.

So we face the reality. One alternative, of course, is to sweep the problem under the rug; the other one is to face it and face the reality, deal with it and introduce legal video lotteries in a controlled, measured environment.

This legislation will provide for the lowest number of video lotteries per capita in Canada of the eight, then nine, provinces that will have video lotteries. Very substantial fines are provided in the legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members for Lake Nipigon, Sudbury East and Welland-Thorold, please come to order. It's very difficult to hear the member.

Mr Pouliot: That's half our party.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): The three stooges.

The Speaker: The member for Brant-Haldimand, that's out of order as well. I'd ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Preston: I just did.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. I ask you to withdraw the comment.

Mr Preston: I withdraw it.

Mr Flaherty: The introduction of video lotteries is on a measured, controlled, phased basis. We will have the lowest number of machines per capita of the then nine Canadian provinces that will have machines. The fines are very heavy under the legislation. Importantly, there will be the combined enforcement of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, which will provide in total more than 100 inspectors. There will be a phased introduction and a review, as we have made clear throughout the committee hearings. We can learn from the other eight provinces.

This legislation is important to racetracks in the province; it's important to all those who work in the horse industry. It's important to the hospitality industry, and we heard from them again and again all over the province, particularly in northern and northwestern Ontario.

There will be substantial revenues for charities; 10% of the video lottery revenues, up to \$180 million, will be going for charities.

1650

Then one listens to the positions taken opposite. At the committee hearings I heard the member for York South, when the mayor of Kenora made her presentation advocating the usefulness in the hospitality industry in northwestern Ontario of video lotteries, call her presentation very balanced. Then the member for Essex South complimented the Ontario Harness Horse Association on advocating video lotteries at racetracks and charity gaming halls, indicating no objection to video lotteries in those locations. So it's hardly, I guess, a matter of principle to the parties opposite.

This act provides a clear framework for gaming control in Ontario. It creates the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, combining the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario and the regulatory functions of the Liquor Control Board of

Ontario, so that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario will no longer have a conflicting responsibility between regulating and retailing. It provides for the creation of permanent charity gaming halls, which will help alleviate the control problems relating to uncontrolled Monte Carlo nights. It also provides for the controlled introduction of video lotteries in the province.

There has been extensive public consultation and debate concerning Bill 75, the Alcohol, Gaming and Charity Funding Public Interest Act. It has been given four hours and 34 minutes of consideration at second reading, 68 hours and 22 minutes —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Durham Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the members for Lake Nipigon and St Catharines come to order please; Sudbury East. The member for Durham Centre's in order. I ask that you maintain decorum in this House and allow the member to finish his statement.

Mr Bradley: He's getting the jackboots out, that's what he's doing.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you have to withdraw that statement right now. It must be withdrawn. It's got to be withdrawn, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker, for you.

The Speaker: I ask the members in the opposition to allow the member for Durham Centre to continue his statement and finish his speech.

Mr Flaherty: We have now spent more than nine hours over four days at third reading debate, of which our caucus on this side of the House has used only a little bit more than one hour to speak. Comparing with the fall of 1995 and the spring of 1996, the average time spent on a bill at third reading was one hour and 55 minutes, excluding bills where there was no debate.

Certainly a case can be made that debating time on a controversial bill should be more extensive than the norm. I would, however, like to point out that we have already spent almost quadruple the amount of time on this legislation at third reading than is normally the case. This legislation has not changed substantially since the bill was debated at second reading. There were six government amendments made to Bill 75. I would also like to point out —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members in the opposition benches, I have to be able to hear the member for Durham Centre. I ask for your cooperation so I may hear the member for Durham Centre.

Mr Flaherty: I would also like to point out that we have now spent almost double the amount of debating time on this legislation at third reading than at second reading. Traditionally, second reading has been utilized in this place as the time for extensive debate.

I move, Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 47, that this question be now put.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Durham Centre, you asked that the question now be put? I had difficulty —

Mr Flaherty: That this question be now put.

Interjections.

The Speaker: No, the motion is completely in order.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I understand that, but is there a further point of order that is also in order?

The Speaker: A point of order is always in order. What I'm trying to say to you is at this point in time the motion has been made by the government member. Therefore, we're now consumed in that motion. It's going to have to have a ruling by the Speaker before any further points of order may be taken.

Mrs McLeod: Even in reference to orders of the day?

The Speaker: Yes, it has to be ruled on beforehand.

I heard the member put the motion. I would ask the indulgence of the House to allow me 15 minutes to review and report back. The House is in recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 1656 to 1710.

The Speaker: I've considered it carefully and I believe that debate should continue.

Mr Flaherty: Bill 75 is a step forward in bringing additional controls to Ontario's gaming marketplace by providing the regulatory framework to address numerous changes to gaming activities. A major part of the bill deals with the new organization with the title the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. This new entity will come about through the merger of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario, the Gaming Control Commission and some regulatory functions of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.

Regulatory functions under the Liquor Control Act will be reassigned under Bill 75 to the new commission in order to consolidate liquor regulation and clarify the LCBO's role as a commercial entity, avoiding confusion between commercial and regulatory roles.

Functions contemplated for transfer include regulation of private delivery services, authorizing and regulating non-LCBO retail liquor stores such as those operated by Brewers' Retail Inc, winery retail stores and Brewers' Retail stores, regulating the marketing methods used by manufacturers. In addition, by combining similar programs in licensing and enforcement, the agency will both obtain efficiencies and improve its flexibility and ability to respond to priorities.

With the introduction of video lotteries, this combination will also enable better enforcement of the strict regulatory requirements the government is imposing on this initiative. It should be noted, in terms of regulation —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, please. I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Durham Centre.

Mr Flaherty: It should be noted, under the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission there will be the combined forces of the current inspectors with the LLBO and the inspectors who are already with the Gaming Commission which will number more than 100 in terms of making inspections in the province. The current inspectors work very hard. They had, in fact, more than 6,000, almost 7,000 spot inspections by the inspectors of the inspections and investigations branch of the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario in the past year, and once an establishment is found to be the source of infractions, inspection activity is required at least once per month until compliance has been achieved for three consecutive months.

Another important enforcement aspect relates to the combining of the alcohol regulatory function and the gaming regulatory function so that an inspector, under the new Alcohol and Gaming Commission, who finds either an alcohol or gaming infraction will be in a position to lay charges with very substantial fines: \$50,000 in the case of an individual or \$250,000 in the case of a corporation.

In addition, the legislation provides that no person under the age of 19 is to have access to gaming premises or the area of gaming premises where video lottery terminals are located, no person is to permit a person under the age of 19 to play a video lottery, and no person under the age of 19 is to seek access to gaming premises where video lottery terminals are located or to play a video lottery.

The consequence to the owners of premises who would breach these provisions of the act would be the potential loss not only of the gaming licence but also of the alcohol licence, which in many of these facilities is the lifeblood, the profit lifeblood of that business. So it's a very effective tool that has been used in other jurisdictions which have both the gaming and alcohol in the same regulatory function.

The new organization will be better able to monitor the development of issues in both liquor and gaming regulation and respond to changes in the marketplace. The merger will benefit the taxpayer by creating operational efficiencies and greater cost-effectiveness. For example, there will be only one board, one chair, one senior management team, rather than two boards, two chairs and two senior management teams. There will be a more flexible allocation of the workload, more efficient geographical assignments, and inspectors will be able to enforce, as I've said, both liquor and gaming regulations. Service will be improved by eliminating overlap and duplication, resulting in the harmonization of forms and cross-training of staff, for example.

The Speaker: Members from the opposition benches, I'm having a very difficult time hearing the member. I would ask that you come to order, and that includes the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Flaherty: The merger will benefit the taxpayer by creating operational efficiencies and greater cost-effectiveness. The more efficient and cost-effective we can make government, its agencies, boards and commissions, the less pressure there is to increase fees and taxes.

As the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has already indicated, the new commission will help to ensure that we have in place the strongest possible screening process for those who wish to become involved in video lotteries as suppliers of equipment and operators of charity gaming halls.

With respect to charities, it might be noted that under the previous government that introduced these roving Monte Carlo nights that are virtually unregulated in this province, and casino gambling, virtually no funds were set aside for education, treatment and research relating to addiction. This is a failure of previous governments which we are remedying; that is, the commitment of the government, which was in the budget statement, was that 2% of the revenues would be used for those purposes of education, treatment and research relating to addiction, which is

consistent with the studies to which I made reference earlier with respect to the percentage of persons who, according to the studies, generally will demonstrate and do demonstrate addictive behaviour with respect to gambling, be the gaming legal or illegal.

Playing video lotteries, to thousands of Canadians today in eight other provinces, is an acceptable form of entertainment. Players of video lotteries tend to play modestly. The studies we have — and there are some studies with respect to what has actually happened in the other eight Canadian provinces that have legalized video lotteries — show a modest spending pattern.

The Addiction Research Foundation study on gambling in Ontario, August 1995, and the more recent study by the University of Windsor, April 1996, found that most people do not spend a lot of time or money on all forms of gambling, about \$10 a week. Specific studies on video lotteries play confirmed the same modest approach to video gaming, with the result that the reality is that the profile of the average video lottery player in Canada is that they play once or twice a week for 30 minutes at a time, spend about \$10 each time and stick to a predetermined gaming/entertainment budget. That's the reality with which we're familiar from the other Canadian provinces.

Mr Kormos: That's the most disgusting speech.

Mr Flaherty: I know the member for Welland-Thorold and others don't want to deal with the reality of what we've seen in other provinces. They don't want to pay attention to the video conferencing that we did. They don't want to pay attention to the evidence that was heard during 14 days of committee hearings. They don't want to deal with the facts. They want to deal with their own preconceived notions of what persons should be permitted to do and not to do in Ontario. But we had those hearings and those hearings were conducted at substantial public expense. The purpose of the hearings of course was to hear the studies and to hear from those persons who are actually involved in the video lottery business, in the gaming business in other areas of Canada that have video lotteries.

1720

In Thunder Bay, for example, with respect to illegal machines, I'm sure the member for Welland-Thorold will recall that we heard evidence about the existence of more than 600 illegal machines in that area alone. Those funds, we were told at the committee hearings, were going out of the province. We were told the same thing in Ottawa.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Get rid of them.

Mr Flaherty: If the member would listen, he'd know that in Quebec bringing in the legalization of the machines resulted in 8,000 being seized; if the member would listen to what we can learn from the other provinces in Canada, if he'd stop being so parochial, if he'd open his ears so he'd know what goes on in other places. He doesn't want to know. He prefers to rest in his ignorance.

We actually know what is going on in certain areas of the province because persons came forward before the committee and told us. I think all members will agree that it's our duty to listen to those who actually have experience in these matters. What is happening in this province with respect to those illegal machines that are there is that

the taxpayers are getting no benefit from them. In fact, the money is being taken, we heard at the committee hearings, out of the province, to Winnipeg and to Buffalo and to Montreal, and going into illegal concerns and illegal hands.

The Alcohol and Gaming Commission will provide a very important tool in terms of regulating premises that have both video lotteries and alcohol licences.

With respect to charities, and this question came up fairly often at the hearings, there was concern about the revenues that charities derive in Ontario from various forms of gaming, be they break-open tickets, Nevada tickets, bingos or other forms of gaming that exist today in the province. This is a legitimate concern because so many of the charities derive income from those sources. The charities will be in a position to have revenues increase by perhaps 10 times what they are now through the revenues that will be coming from video lotteries. There will be funds for the charities from the permanent charity gaming halls — that's the first source — and then from those video lotteries that are away from the racetracks. It's important to note —

Mr Bisson: It's not a VLT, it's a slot machine, the crack cocaine of gambling.

Mr Flaherty: I hear them talking about the crack cocaine of gambling. I remind them that Dr Room from the Addiction Research Foundation publicly chastised them for using that expression, how wrong they were to use that expression, how inaccurate it was, but they persist in it because they know better, I suppose, than the Addiction Research Foundation knows.

Mr Kormos: Why don't you come clean? Be honest.

Mr Flaherty: I'm sure the member for Welland-Thorold knows better than the Addiction Research Foundation.

We have the two sources for charities, if I may go back to the point: the permanent charity gaming halls, the tables in those gaming halls and the video lottery machines away from the racetracks, and then some roving charities that will persist under this legislation. There will be an overall increase in funding for charities, as I mentioned, of up to \$180 million, which is more than 10 times the revenues being received by charities in Ontario today through the virtually unregulated or impossible-to-regulate Monte Carlo nights.

The government is dealing with an important reality in today's society and that is that people participate in gaming activities. We are dealing with the reality. We're not going to sweep the problem under the rug. We're going to face the problem that exists already today without Bill 75 in Ontario because of the Monte Carlo nights that were introduced by previous governments, because of the casinos that were introduced by the previous NDP government. We already have a situation in Ontario where gaming is available, which results in an addiction problem on a certain —

Mr Colle: It all started with the horse racing. Who brought that into the province?

Mr Bisson: Who bought you, Jim? Which organized syndicate got to you?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I'd like to hear the speaker. It's his time. The member for Durham Centre.

Mr Flaherty: The problem should not be swept under the rug. There is addictive behaviour not only with respect to gaming but also to alcohol and other substances.

Mr Bisson: We know what he's going to say, he's the spokesperson for the mob. He's speaking on behalf of organized crime.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite is indicating that the member is speaking on behalf of the organized mob. I would ask you to ask them to withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: I don't think that's a point of order. I didn't hear anything out of place.

Mr Baird: Would you ask the member for Cochrane South to withdraw?

The Acting Speaker: It is not a point of order. The member for Durham Centre.

Mr Baird: As long as you don't hear it, it's okay.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like you to take your seat. I'd like to hear the member for Durham Centre.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Those who oppose Bill 75 are in a situation now where they are supporting the illegal realities in Ontario today. There is substantial revenue being derived from illegal video lotteries. There is substantial revenue being derived from illegal gaming in Ontario. There is substantial revenue being derived from the inability to properly police these roving Monte Carlo nights and properly regulate them.

That is what this legislation attempts to do: wrest control back from the elements to which the members opposite refer who now have a great deal of activity in these areas, quite obviously, given the number of illegal machines and the difficulties regulating Monte Carlo nights, take control back in the government's hands, face the social reality that many persons in Ontario view gaming as a form of entertainment, face the reality that our racetracks are in desperate need of revenue, face the reality that thousands of people who otherwise would have difficulty being employed are employed in the horse business and the racetrack business.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: We heard that all across the province. The member for Kingston and The Islands doesn't care about the people who work in the horse business. He should have been on the hearings. He should have heard what we heard in the hospitality industry in northern Ontario, in northwestern Ontario, in southwestern Ontario, what we heard all across the province. It may not be important to the member for Kingston and The Islands but it's very important to the persons who work in the horse industry in Ontario.

The purpose of the legislation is to create a framework. There is implementation to be done. The government is committed to further consultations with respect to the implementation phases. There are important issues to be addressed with respect to implementation, including the definition of "charity" — what is a charity and what is not; the issue of permanent charity gaming halls — how many there should be and where they should be; and numerous other questions that were raised before the

committee, including possible effects on various other types of gaming. These are all important issues that need to be addressed in the implementation stage.

I would like to comment on one other aspect of the legislation that deals with so-called salting of the earth. We have had the experience in Ontario, regrettably, of premises having their licences suspended, appealing those suspensions and then transferring licences, transferring leases, using endeavours, methods to defeat the suspension of the licence, thereby permitting the premises to continue to operate and sell alcohol. This is a social evil that needs to be eradicated. This bill addresses the problem by prohibiting that sort of activity to circumnavigate the suspension imposed by what will be the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. It is very important to eradicate neighbourhood trouble spots in various areas of the province that have been brought to the attention of this government and it is an abuse that needs to be corrected.

1730 This legislation establishes a framework for the future regulation and control of alcohol and gaming in Ontario. It is legislation that deals with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, regulating permanent charity gaming halls and the difficult problem of illegal video lotteries in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Bartolucci: I find it unusual that the member for Durham Centre can stand and say that we should be listening to what the people are saying. I suggest that he heed his own advice and listen to what the people of Ontario are saying. Clearly they're saying, by a 62% margin, that they don't want slot machines, they don't want VLTs next door on every corner in every municipality. If they won't listen to the people of Ontario, if he refuses to listen to the people of Ontario, maybe he'll listen to the people who are charged with trying to enforce law and order once these things arrive.

Paul Gottschalk, the acting staff inspector, special investigations services of Metropolitan Toronto Police, says, "I believe that those who predict the legalization of VLTs will lessen or eliminate illegal VLTs are incorrect." The member for Durham Centre, you're incorrect. The police are saying you're wrong. "Illegal machines, which are subject to taxation or return percentage monitoring are virtual cash collectors and in the absence of enforcement may become indistinguishable as legitimate equipment."

The member for Durham Centre, you have to understand that your direction is wrong. Listen to what Gary Smith, a gambling specialist, says: "The VLT is the most addictive form of gambling, addictive because it is fast, addictive because it provides instant gratification, addictive because it is paced for the modern way of thinking, younger people who are used to computerized gambling instead of dealing cards or throwing dice."

Clearly the member for Durham Centre should listen to what the people of Ontario are saying, should listen to what the experts in Ontario and abroad are saying, and stop the insanity.

Mr Kormos: What's crucial here is that some very obvious questions be answered. The 1995 Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario report on gambling and organized crime has been suppressed by this government

notwithstanding that members of this assembly have been requesting the production of that report now for months. We have to wonder why the government would be so anxious to suppress that report. We now know, because of leaked portions of it, that one actor called Tony Depizza — I think the government has to account for what the relationship, if any is, with Tony Depizza, who is also known as Lucio Sandrin, former mobster, working, it's reported, in the past for the Volpe mob organization here in Canada. Lucio Sandrin is a director of Cadith Entertainments Ltd. One of the other directors is Frank Di Maria. Again, the question has to be asked, how well does Mr Flaherty or the minister know Mr Di Maria or Mr Sandrin, or, as he's otherwise known, Tony Depizza, either now or in his former life as a member of Volpe's mob? You see, Cadith's was one of the submissions to Mr Flaherty's committee which urged this government to introduce VLTs.

I tell you that the facts are there. The mob supports slots and video lottery terminals. Organized crime supports slots and video lottery terminals. They stand to make the biggest amount of money from the pockets of the poorest and most vulnerable in this province, and this government's prepared to aid and abet them to be parties to that attack on the poor and working people of this province.

The question has to be asked as to why Larry Moodie of the OPP's illegal gambling squad was never consulted by this government, was never called before the committee. This government doesn't want Ontarians to know the truth. This government's in bed with the mob.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member said, "This government's in bed with the mob." We implore you to enforce the rules. He explicitly said that. He said it word for word. We call on you to call the member to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm ruling on a point of order. There's too much noise in here and I can't hear. I did not hear any such accusation. I'm sorry if I didn't, but I did not and I cannot rule on something like that.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I will not warn the member for Nepean again. You will come to order.

Comments and questions?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to take a couple of minutes in support of the comments made by the member for Durham Centre and to comment as well on the speech given a few minutes ago by the member for Sudbury East. We're hearing all sorts of great diatribes and glib rhetoric from the other side; we're hearing all sorts of great heckling. I thought the whole motion we just voted on was to end debate, and they obviously don't want to hear any more, as they're evidencing right now.

But the point made by the member for Sudbury East was that somehow the VLTs would be an assault on Nevada tickets. Perhaps the member opposite should know, because she didn't bother checking when she was a minister of the crown, that the current Nevada ticket setup, put in place by the NDP government, is estimated to be losing at least \$50 million to \$100 million a year in

pure, unmitigated fraud. Because they didn't have the intelligence to put serial numbers on their Nevada tickets, they didn't have the intelligence to cross-reference between the printers and the users, it is possible for each charity to order 50 boxes from every licensed printer. The charity only reports the number it was duly authorized to sell — let's say, 50 cases — but an unscrupulous person could order from two or three or four printers.

They put in no controls. They don't care about fiscal management. They don't care that their taxation policies destroyed gambling at the racetracks. They don't care about the 25,000 jobs they lost there. All they care about is opposing this bill, which is well thought out and considered. It replaces the illegal VLTs, which every police officer, every police chief, will tell you without any report are a blight on our society. They're a front for the mob, and the bottom line is that this bill allows us to remedy with legal means the illegal steps taken by that government to vex our economy.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is my privilege to identify for the public the apologists we have on the other side of the House for one of the worst-thought-out government bills we've seen here in decades.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand the cut and thrust of debate, but I think that honourable members, when they have the floor, are entitled to a reasonable hearing.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Oh, come on, stop wasting the chamber's time.

Mr Conway: I hear from my friends opposite, "How could school children ever come to this place?"

Mr Spina: I'm not opposite, idiot.

Mr Conway: I'm just asking my friends to give a newly elected member the decency of a hearing.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order, and I agree wholeheartedly.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would ask for that time to be restored to the clock.

It's important for the members opposite to hear what they're not able to hear so far, what they didn't hear from the Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, for which they're responsible — that organized crime increases with this bill — and what they didn't hear from the charities all across the province. Members, including the honourable member opposite, were told that they will lose money because of the greed of this government. This government will take away money from existing revenue and will not replace it. This government, with its newfound statist approach, will take all the money from the various places across the province and then force charities to apply for it. There is nothing in terms of Bill 75 that this government has done in the public interest.

Mr Speaker, I'd ask your indulgence for the rest of the time that is available.

1740

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Flaherty: I listened with interest to the comments of the member for York South, who told the mayor of Kenora that he thought her presentation was very balanced. That was the presentation that supported video

lotteries. He says something different here today; another place, another time, a different statement.

He also says that charities will receive less money — that's the member for York South. It shows he's a true Liberal; that is, he can't count, because \$180 million is a lot more than \$10 million, and that is the type of increase that charities will benefit from in the province of Ontario, which I thought he would have realized from the many speeches that have been made over five days of debate in this place on this subject. This debate has gone on for quite a long time in this House, and that point has been made a number of times about the increased revenues for charities in Ontario that will be generated as a result of this legislation.

With respect to the member for Sudbury, I appreciate his comments with respect to video lotteries being on every corner in the province. There is one place in Canada where that's true. It's not Ontario and it won't be under Bill 75, but if you're looking for video lotteries in corner stores, go to the Liberal government in the province of New Brunswick. That's where you'll find video lotteries in corner stores in the Dominion of Canada. That's where you'll find them, I say to the member for Sudbury. So again we get conflicting messages from the other side on this issue.

With respect to organized crime, and the member for Welland-Thorold keeps bringing this up — with illegal video lottery machines, with barely controlled Monte Carlo nights, the situation is that those sources to which the member refers have an ability which I think he will agree they ought not to have in this province. Contrary to the opponents of gaming, control weakens traditional organized crime; that is, the more government regulates and controls, the less of a grip that type of organization will have in this province, and I'm sure the members want that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs McLeod: I guess it's with some reluctance, some hesitation, that I rise to participate in the debate today, because it seems to have been descending to a level that none of us likes to see in this House. I think back to one of the first things that I ever learned about parliamentary procedure, and it has a rather gender-biased connotation to it, but it comes out of Robert's Rules of Order in which it says that in this place we should be debating the measure and not the man. To hear the member for Scarborough East make allusions about a member of the opposition not somehow having the intelligence to participate in the debate is so far beneath the accepted decorum and standard of debate in this House, it really makes it difficult to participate in this.

Mr Gilchrist: Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: That is a terribly unfair characterization of what I said on the record. I said that this government —

Interjections.

Mr Gilchrist: Mr Speaker, she has quoted —

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. There are two of us standing. One of us is clearly out of order, and it's not me.

That is not a point of privilege, and I recognize the member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: It had not been my intention to begin the debate this way, but I'm still so appalled at what occurred in this House earlier today when the government attempted to force closure on this very controversial piece of legislation.

I think it's important that I preface my remarks on the bill itself by putting into context what the government attempted to do here today, because short of a year ago, just about this time, when the government brought in its infamous Bill 26, with no notice that it was going to be brought in, a piece of legislation which was beyond anything that this Legislature had ever seen before, a piece of legislation which they wanted to ram through with two weeks' debate, which nobody could have ever considered giving due process in a parliamentary debate to legislation of that magnitude, not since that day have I seen an effort made to bulldoze through a piece of legislation in as unconscionable a way as was attempted by the government this afternoon.

I do not in any way hold the member for Durham Centre responsible for what happened; it was obviously the government House leader. I saw him in conversation with the member for Durham Centre during the afternoon, clearly saying to him, "In the middle of your presentation on this debate, you will move a motion of closure, and we'll hope that the Speaker of today will let it pass." Fortunately for democratic debate, the Speaker of the day did not let it pass.

This is not an issue, as the member for Durham Centre went on to say, of whether or not there has been adequate time for debate on this issue. I would suggest to you, as one of my members has, that in our view you can't really put time limits on due democratic debate. But I would also say that, from our perspective, no time is ever going to be enough to fully debate and consider a piece of legislation which is so fundamentally going to change lives in every community across the province. So we are not going to ever agree that there has been enough time to debate this bill. We believe that this bill should be removed, that it should not be before this Legislature.

But that's really not what the source of anger was an hour ago. The anger was that we came into the House today in the full expectation that, as the House leaders agreed last week, we would be debating the family support bill today. On the orders of the day, which normally sets out what we will be debating in the House, it says, "Orders of the day to be announced." The government that wanted to proceed to consider this controversial piece of legislation didn't even have the courage to provide notice to this House that this would be the item it was calling today, let alone give us any indication that it would call a vote today.

I suggest to you that that is not only unparliamentary, it is undemocratic, it is unconscionable, it is indefensible and it is a sign of a government that has absolutely no courage of its convictions when it comes to this piece of legislation. It is just so evident that this government is anxious to get this over and done with and off the books so that it can get its slot machines up and running and it can get its pound of flesh and cash that comes from people who will become compulsive gamblers as a result of this legislation.

It is so obvious that this government is so in defiance of its own principles and everything that individual members of the now government used to say about gambling in this province that it just wants to get this debate over and done with as fast as it possibly can. It is so obvious that the members of this government don't want to hear any of the arguments. They don't want to hear the evidence of their own police commission and the reports that had been prepared for them. They don't want to look at the evidence of what has happened in other provincial jurisdictions. They don't want to hear what communities have to say, the 56 communities that are saying, "We don't want slot machines in our communities." They certainly don't want to hear the views of the 62% of Ontarians who have said they do not want slot machines in their communities.

This government is afraid that if this debate were to go on even an hour longer, let alone a day longer, that they might have to open their ears. Maybe they heard the Premier starting to back off a little bit today when he said: "Well, maybe we'll have to limit the proliferation of slot machines. Maybe we'll have to be just a little bit careful."

Let me assure the members opposite who are anxious to get the money from the slot machines to pay for their tax cut that I don't think you need to worry about the Premier backing off. I think the Premier wants to cool things out a bit because he knows how much opposition there is, how much resistance there is. He knows that his government cannot sustain the reaction to this. He just wants this off the front pages of the newspapers and off the television cameras for a little while so that he can get his slot machines out there, they can start paying the government off, hopefully the issue will go away and then the slot machines will proliferate to every bar and restaurant on every corner of every neighbourhood.

Mr Preston: That's not going to happen. That never will happen.

Mrs McLeod: Yes, I say to the member opposite, that is exactly what is going to happen.

There is a part of me that is in fact very pleased to be able to participate on this particular day. I'm pleased that at least the government was not able to bulldoze this particular closure motion through the House, as it has attempted to bulldoze every other part of its agenda. I'm glad to have a chance to at least participate, because today was the day when we released a poll that we conducted, conducted by an independent firm, a poll that is statistically significant if the members opposite would actually care to know what 62% of Ontarians have to tell them about slot machines. They said they don't want them; 62% said they don't want them.

You can dismiss the poll results. You can dismiss anything you want to dismiss. But somebody had to find out what the people of this province were thinking and what they cared about. The government wasn't prepared to do it, so somebody had to be prepared to ask. If the government doesn't want to listen, if they don't want to hear, so be it, but we were at least prepared to ask. Open your ears and hear what people in this province had to say.

1750

Maybe you want to go back and find out what Mike Harris used to say about gambling and about revenues

from gambling, because I think that's another reason why they want to bulldoze this thing through: They hope we will stop reminding them of the kinds of commitments that their now Premier used to make. I think there's one particular quotation which says it all, because this is what Mike Harris was saying just prior to the 1995 election — not in such a distant part of our memories that we shouldn't be able to recall it. I recall it really well. There's a lot of that election that stands out in my mind.

I recall Mike Harris going across the province saying, "We are going to have a referendum before there is any new casino in this province." Now we never figured out whether it was to be a province-wide referendum or a local referendum or whether one referendum would do it for everybody or not, but at least it was absolutely clear there was going to be a referendum before there was any further casino. That part was clear. There was never any talk ever —

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Were you in favour of casinos?

Mrs McLeod: I say to the member for Mississauga South, there was never any talk on the part of the member for Nipissing, who is now our Premier, about introducing slot machines. He was going to have a referendum on casinos. Who ever was talking about slot machines? Here's what he was saying about revenue from gambling. He was very concerned about it, and Mike Harris said:

"I don't want the Ontario government to have it. I don't want the money. I don't want a million dollars a day in the province of Ontario. Part of the problem is the Ontario government has too much money, wants too much money, borrows too much money, spends too much money."

Then in a May 16, 1995, letter to John Chalmers, the chairman of the Charitable Gaming Alliance, Mike Harris promised, and I quote: "A Harris government will not move on VLTs until all sectors have been consulted, all impacts are assessed and an agreement is reached on the distribution of revenues."

There is one giant promise broken, because there is no agreement on the distribution on revenues, there has been no assessment of impacts — in fact this government closes its ears to any assessment of the impact of what will happen when slot machines are introduced in this province — and there has certainly not been consultation with all who would like to have their voices heard.

I remember how opposed Mr Eves, the now finance minister who is so anxious to get the dollars from these slot machines, was in the past. Well, I guess it's different. Mike Harris said, "I don't want the Ontario government to have it," but that's when he wasn't the Ontario government. Now he is the Ontario government and his finance minister is clearly as desperate as he is to have to get the money now. I guess the bottom line is that principles disappear when your only guiding principle is to somehow get the dollars you need to pay for the tax cut, which is the one promise they seem to be determined to keep.

We know that the numbers in the campaign book never added up. The Conservatives could never do all the things they told Ontarians they were going to do and still deliver that tax cut. They have a problem. They can't balance the budget and protect health care and protect classroom funding, and we've seen that they haven't been able to

protect classroom funding. They can't protect policing. They've got to sacrifice the environment; they've got to sacrifice natural resources. It goes on and on, and they still have a financial problem. So now they're prepared to do what they never said they would do.

Based on some of the past statements of the leaders of the government, it was reasonable for us to assume that this was something they never would do. But Mr Saunderson, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, has said it about as clearly as it can be said. He says: "Quite simply, slot machines are a good source of cash. Financially, they make sense." There's the bottom line, drawn as clearly and as plainly and as frankly as any member of the government is prepared to draw it.

There's no doubt we're talking about a lot of easy money for the government. The government says \$260 million, but that's obviously just a beginning. In fact, I think that is a modest beginning that the government presents for itself. I haven't attempted to go into all the details of why the government thinks it's only going to get \$260 million while the charities that are supposed to benefit are only going to get their 10%, but it does leave me, just on the surface of it, to question that if they're only getting \$260 million and the charities are only getting 10%, who's getting the really big money? I don't really believe this government is going to let all of that potentially large amount of money go into private sector hands, so I have to believe that the government is looking for a lot more than \$260 million.

There might be some point in this debate in talking about whether or not you see any difference between slot machines and VLTs and casinos. Casinos were an issue during the campaign. Casinos were the issue the Premier was prepared to talk about having a referendum on. There were positions taken on casinos, and I am quite prepared to talk about casinos as a separate issue. It's not what we're talking about in this legislation. In this legislation we're talking about slot machines. We're not talking about a controlled environment of a casino with tight regulations, with the capacity presumably to enforce them. That's not what we're talking about.

We are talking about unlimited numbers — 20,000 to begin with, but nothing in this legislation which limits the number of slot machines which can be introduced. The Premier acknowledges that this is just the beginning. If they can enforce this, if they can enforce the slot machines and the charity casinos and they can enforce it in the racetracks, then they'll begin to look at bars and they'll begin to look at restaurants.

There's another difference: Casinos create jobs. That's why a lot of communities have come to the government of the past day and the government of today. The casinos create jobs, and communities like the job creation. That is not true for slot machines, I say to the members opposite. Listen to the communities. Communities have come to you and said, "We're interested in casinos." You're not getting communities coming to you and saying, "Give us a slot machine on every corner of every neighbourhood." You've got 56 communities saying, "We don't want these slot machines," and you don't want to hear that.

I want to acknowledge that there are concerns. There continue to be concerns about the effect of the introduction of casinos on compulsive gambling and on organized

crime. Those of us who are prepared to read what the police say acknowledge that this is a continuing concern. If there is a concern about organized crime's involvement in casinos, which are supposedly tightly regulated, tightly controlled, enforced, think how much greater the concern is when it comes to slot machines that proliferate right across this province. There is no realistic means of enforcing regulations that this government might put in place to give the appearance that it is going to control the proliferation and the use of slot machines, that it's going to be able to deal with organized crime's ability to take advantage of the proliferation of slot machines.

The government can't be comfortable with this. I'm not surprised that they have tried to bulldoze this through today. I'm not surprised, because this government cannot be comfortable with this based on the concerns it has expressed in the past. I don't think there's any way they can be comfortable with the social consequences and I believe that is why this government is so absolutely determined to ignore —

Mrs Marland: Are you comfortable?

Mrs McLeod: The member for Mississauga South asks me if I'm comfortable. I'm not comfortable with any process in which the government of the day wants to ignore studies that have been done, ignore the evidence that has been brought forward in recent weeks and recent months, studies that have been done that express the concerns about the involvement of organized crime in legalized gambling and indeed the concerns about how much more difficult it will be to control organized crime if slot machines proliferate. I'm not comfortable with any government that wants to forge ahead with legislation that will significantly change life in our communities when it's not prepared to look at the experience of any other jurisdiction.

I believe if this government was prepared to look at any of this data, particularly given the concerns it has expressed in the past, it would have to be prepared at least to step back a piece, and if it had to step back a piece, then it would lose the big dollars the finance minister needs. That, I repeat, is the bottom line. That's what's driving all of this.

This government is prepared to ignore all of the testimony, all of the evidence of experts who have talked about the role of VLTs and their influence on the development of compulsive gambling. I'm only going to quote from one. It happens to be somebody from the Addiction Research Foundation in Thunder Bay, Lyle Nicol, who

presented to the committee. He said it again quite plainly, quite simply:

"VLTs are a seductive form of gambling that are very addictive. They isolate people and they promise instant gratification. The reality is that more people lose than win, and in most areas, VLT players comprise the largest percentage of people who are actively seeking help for gambling problems."

That should be enough to give the government some concern about the open-ended nature of the bill that's before this House. Do they really think that their government is going to pull back from the big dollars they're looking for? Do they really believe that? No. It's far more likely that they're going to continue to ignore all the evidence that's there. They're already, as many members have pointed out, determined to ignore the evidence that could be presented by the chairman of Criminal Intelligence Service Ontario, who has made it so clear that he is not in favour of slot machines. He has advised the government of that. The government doesn't seem to care about it. They've refused even to acknowledge that they've seen the report.

I don't particularly want to get into the debate of whether the government has or hasn't seen the report. What I find absolutely incredible is that when their very own Ontario Provincial Police criminal intelligence service has a report which could have an important bearing on a piece of legislation, a fundamental change that this government is preparing to introduce, they don't want to see it. If they haven't seen it, that is the biggest indictment of the government that could possibly be made. Close your eyes, close your ears, don't look at anything that would get in the way —

Mr Kennedy: They're afraid of it.

Mrs McLeod: — because they are afraid of it. They're afraid they would have to back away from the big bucks that their finance minister needs. Their own criminal intelligence service is concerned about the involvement of legalized crime, and our government chooses to ignore their concerns.

They're also ready to ignore the experience of other jurisdictions, but it being 6 of the clock, I expect you're going to ask me to conclude my remarks and continue the debate tomorrow.

The Speaker: Thank you. It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1802.

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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